

Bulleh Shah

J. R. Puri
&
T. R. Shangari

Radha Soami Satsang Beas

Bulleh Shah, the 18th century mystic poet from the Punjab, was the most popular Sufi saint of his times. In fact, some eminent writers have called him "the greatest Sufi poet of the Punjab." His admirers have even compared his writings and philosophy to those of Rumi. At present he is held in equally great esteem in Northern India and Pakistan.

Bulleh Shah's poems are suffused with love for God and his Master or *Murshid*. The other dominant note in his poetry is on very strong denunciation of empty rituals and external observances of religion.

He does not believe in saying something in roundabout ways. Whatever he has to convey, he says it by hitting the nail on the head. His poems are marked, not only by plain speaking, but also by bluntness. This produces a poignancy of feeling together with a depth of insight, which puts all artifice to shame. His poetry rises spontaneously from the depth of his heart, even as a fountain spouts from the depths of the earth. It has a kind of abandon which produces an intoxicating effect on the reader. No wonder it has always been a favorite choice for the group of singers called *qawwals*.

Mystics of the East Series

Bulleh Shah

(1680—1758)

Bulleh Shah

The Love-intoxicated Iconoclast

J. R. Puri
&
T. R. Shangari

Radha Soami Satsang Beas

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DEDICATED
TO
MAHARAJ CHARAN SINGH

without whose inspiring guidance and encouragement
it would not have been possible to offer this book
in the present form

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PREFACE

This is the tenth book in our *Mystics of the East* series. As already indicated, the object of the series is to bring out the fact that all true saints — no matter to which period, country or race they belong — propagate the same teachings. There is no difference between the one and the other. They all proclaim that God is one, Truth is one and the same. Their method of presentation may be different, depending on the ethos of the people of their country, but the Truth never changes.

Many books have been written on *Bulleh Shah*, but hardly any one has tried to explain the real meanings of his writings, most of which are couched in mystic language. Years of research have been spent by the authors in order to bring out the hidden mystic meaning of Bulleh Shah's poetry, which is full of love, devotion, longing, and humility. This has proved an exhausting and laborious project as the authors had to explore intensively all the avenues for bringing their work to a successful conclusion. Their acknowledgments will be found under the subject "Authors' Note."

We are grateful to the authors for their patient and painstaking efforts resulting in the addition of this valuable monograph to our publications.

S. L. Sondhi

Secretary

Radha Soami Satsang Beas,
Punjab, India
December 12, 1985

AUTHORS' NOTE

Bulleh Shah has aroused keen interest in his readers for his sublime poetry. His poems, surcharged with divine love, have held them in a spell for nearly 250 years. They are suffused with love of God and love of his Master, and leave an intoxicating effect on the reader. No less dominant in his poetry is the refrain of strong denunciation of barren rituals and external observances of religion. He is equally critical of the sham pedantry of empty scholarship. Thus, he could well be designated as a love-intoxicated iconoclast.

It has been our endeavor, through an in-depth and analytical study of Bulleh Shah's poetry, to bring to surface a vast treasure of mystic wealth that lay buried in it. Till now his poetry has been studied and admired by various writers mainly for its literary excellence. Anwar Ali Rohtaki was perhaps the first scholar who brought to light some of its mystic aspects.

Scholars have generally viewed poetic utterances of saints and mystics from a historical standpoint. They trace these utterances to certain external sources, such as the Vedant, Sufism and the Bhagti movement. It does not strike them that the remarkable resemblance in the works of mystics could well accrue from the similarity—and indeed the identity—of their experiences. Mystics do not borrow their ideas from others. They have a direct perception of Reality, which becomes the fountainhead of their teachings. Since Reality is one, its perception by mystics is bound to be the same. And the teachings that flow from this perception are necessarily similar.

The study of Bulleh Shah was beset with various problems. The main problem was the absence of a standard and universally accepted text. These variations in the text have often been perplexing. At places, apparently minor variations lead to vastly different interpretations. All the same, every effort has been made to present a consistent account, so that the basic framework of his philosophy is not affected. Almost all available texts were consulted, but we have mainly relied on the texts prepared by Dr. Faqir Mohammad, Maulana Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Dr. Nazir Ahmad and Mr. Abdul Majid Bhatti.

Although the study of the aesthetic and literary aspects of Bulleh Shah's poetry was not a part of the project, a short chapter on his poetic style has been included in the book for the benefit of readers. For its natural, forceful flow, forthright expression, novelty of metaphor and an exquisite choice of words, Bulleh Shah's poetry is unrivaled.

We are grateful to Prof. K. S. Narang, former Vice-Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala for giving us valuable suggestions. We must also thank Dr. Kirpal Singh 'Khak' for extending his scholarly help every now and then. This book went through repeated revisions, and Mrs. Kamla Samtani ungrudgingly typed each draft with love and devotion. She was helped in preparing the final draft by Miss Indu Kirpalani. We are indebted to them both. Last but not least, we are grateful to Miss Louise Hilger who, as usual, has taken pains to prepare the press copy.

J. R. PURI
T. R. SHANGARI

SECTION
ONE

LIFE

Life

Mysterious is the turn of time. The man who had been refused by the mullahs to be buried after his death in the community graveyard because of his unorthodox views, today enjoys worldwide reverence and recognition. The tomb of Bulleh Shah in Qasur and the area around it is today the only place free of collective refuse, and the privileged of the city pay handsomely to be buried in the proximity of the man they had once rejected.”¹ This radical change has been possible because people have been impressed in the course of time by the holy way of Bullah’s life and the efficacy of his teachings.

“The greatest Sufi poet of the Punjab was Mir Bulleh Shah Qadiri Shatari.”² Because of his pure life and high spiritual attainments, he is equally popular among all communities. Scholars and dervishes have called him “The Sheikh of Both the Worlds,” “The man of God,” “The Knower of Spiritual Grace” and by other equally edifying titles. Considered as the greatest mystic poet of the Punjab, his compositions have been regarded as “the pinnacle of Sufi literature.” His admirers compare his writings and philosophy to those of Rumi and Shams-i-Tabriz. At present, he is held in equally great esteem in Northern India and Pakistan.

1. Taufiq Rafat: *Bulleh Shah*, A selection 1982, p.1.

2. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi: *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. II p. 445.
Hereafter, it will be referred to as *A History of Sufism in India*.

Bulleh Shah's real name was Abdullah Shah. From Abdullah Shah it changed to Bullah Shah or Bulleh Shah. "Out of affection some call him Baba Bulleh Shah, some, Sain Bulleh Shah and some others merely Bullah."¹ The 40th Knot* gives evidence of his true name. "Invoking the name of God, now pray to Him, the Lord pervades everywhere Abdullah exists no more."

There is some difference of opinion among research scholars about the time of his birth and death. The majority, however, believes that he lived from 1680 to 1758. Even about his birthplace there is some controversy. Some researchers hold the view that he was born in the village Uch Gilaniyan in Bahawalpur State (Pakistan).² They believe that Bulleh Shah remained in this village up to the age of six months,³ when his parents were residing here, but who shifted to village Malakwal (Tehsil Sahiwal, Dist. Multan) for some reason. They had not been in Malakwal for a long time, when the owner of village Pandoke felt the need of a preacher for the village mosque. On the recommendations of the people of Malakwal, he approached Bulleh Shah's father, Shah Mohammed Dervish, and took him to Pandoke where he performed the duties not only of the preacher but also of the village teacher for children.

All researchers agree on the point that the ancestral village of Bulleh Shah's parents was Uch Gilaniyan, and it is from there that they shifted first to Malakwal and later to Pandoke. However, some researchers hold the

1. Gurdev Singh: *Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah*, p. 12.

2. Maula Baksh Kushta, Lajwanti Ramakrishna, and Fakir Mohd. have concluded it from the data available with them.

3. According to some scholars it is six years.

* A form of poetry.

view that Bulleh Shah's birth took place after his parents had shifted to Pandoke. Today it is known as Pandoke Bhatian. It is about 14 miles southeast of Qasur and is quite well-known. In fact, Bulleh Shah's contribution to make it famous is considerable. It is said that from among the ancestors of Bulleh Shah, Sayeed Jalaluddin Bukhari came to Multan from Surakh-Bukhara three hundred years earlier. Here he got initiated from Hazarat Sheikh Ghaus Bahauddin Zakrya of Multan, and here eventually he settled down. Bulleh Shah's grandfather, Sayyiad Abdur Razzaq, descended from the same line. Thus Bulleh Shah's family, being of Sayyiad caste, was related to prophet Mohammed on the one hand and on the other hand with Sufi thought and mystic traditions, for centuries.

Bulleh Shah's father, Shah Mohammed Dervish, was well versed in Arabic, Persian and the holy Qura'n. He was a noble soul with spiritual leanings. It is said that out of the whole family, Bulleh Shah's sister had the greatest love for him, who, like her brother, remained celibate all her life, and spent much of her time in meditation. Both, brother and sister, had been greatly influenced by the high moral character of their father who, out of respect for him, had been given the title "Dervish." The tomb of Bulleh Shah's father still exists in Pandoke Bhatian. Every year an urs¹ is performed at the tomb and Bulleh Shah's *kafis* are sung there. In this way a tribute is paid to both, father and son, and it has assumed the form of a tradition to perpetuate their memory.

Bulleh Shah's childhood was spent under the care of his father at Pandoke. He received his early education,

1. A religious ceremony celebrating the union of the soul of a deceased saint with the Supreme Being.

like that of other children, from his father. Later, for higher education he was sent to Qasur, which was a well-known educational center those days.

In Qasur there were eminent teachers such as Hazarat Ghulam Murtaza and Maulana Mohiyuddin. Their fame had spread far and wide. Bulleh Shah too became a pupil of Hazarat Ghulam Murtaza. With his native intelligence and moral inclination, he gained much from his contact with his teacher.

There is a strong historical evidence to show that Bulleh Shah was an eminent scholar of Arabic and Persian. From his own compositions we can find many references to Islamic thought and mystic literature. Later, when he attained mystic realization, his erudition and learning acquired a new significance. But Bulleh Shah had to pass through a hard struggle before he could attain the inner knowledge. This attainment was possible only through his contact with his Murshid or Master, Inayat Shah. The study of scriptures and other holy books had only aroused his interest and curiosity about spiritual realization. His longing for union with the Lord reached its consummation only after he met a perfect Master in the person of Shah Inayat Qadiri.

Inayat Shah was a well-known Qadiri Sufi of his time. From the historical point of view the Qadiri Sufis can be traced back to the Sufi Saint Abdul Qadri Jilani (1077/78 to 1166) of Bagdad. Jilani is also known by the names Pir Dastgir and Piran-i-Pir. Bulleh Shah himself has also given a hint that his "Master of Masters" was born in Bagdad but his own Master belonged to Lahore:

My Master of Masters hailed from Bagdad,
but my Master belongs to the throne of Lahore.

It is all the same. For He himself is the kite
and He himself is the string.

Two collections of Sheikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani's sermons, *al Fathal Rabbani*, comprising 62 and the *Futuh al-Ghaib*, containing 78 of them, are well known to Islamic readers.¹ In one of the sermons, he strongly denounced his contemporaries for their materialistic way of life. In another sermon he said, "Good and evil were two fruits emerging from two branches of a single tree. One of the branches yielded sweet fruit and the other bitter; it would be wise, therefore, for people to move to areas where the sweet fruits were to be found."² Also, "A *jihad* fought against self-will was, to Sheikh Abdul-Qadir far superior to that waged with the sword. Through this struggle the idolatry of the self and the worship of created things (the hidden *shirk*) could be vanquished."³ Sheikh Jilani "advised his audience that seekers of God had to be indifferent towards even the life hereafter and to cultivate pleasure only in the thought of annihilation and abiding poverty in this life."⁴

In India the influence of the Sufi Qadiri thought was felt after three centuries in 1432 through the person of Mohammed Ghaus, a Sufi dervish. Mohammed Ghaus first settled in Bahawalpur, but later his teachings reached far and wide.

The Sufi saint of Punjab, Mian Mir (1550-1635 A.D.) was also connected with the Qadiri tradition. It is well-known that Guru Ram Das got the foundation of Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar laid by Mian Mir. The story is also current that at the time of the Mughul

1 to 4. *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I, pp. 84-85.

emperor Jahangir's persecution of the fifth Guru, Shri Arjun Dev, Mian Mir sought the approval of Guru Arjun Dev to raze the town of Delhi to the ground if he so permitted. The Guru replied that he could also do it, but under all conditions one must live in the will of God. It is obvious from this that there was great love between Mian Mir and the Gurus, and that he was held in great esteem by them.

The date of birth of Inayat Shah Qadiri (died 1728 A.D.) is not known. But, from one of his own hand-written manuscripts it is evident that he was enjoying good health in 1699 A.D. He was an eminent Sufi saint of the Qadiri tradition and is said to be a scholarly author. He wrote a number of Persian books on mysticism, from among which *Dastur-ul-Amal*, *Islah-ul-Amal*, *Lataif-i-Ghaibya*, and *Ishartul-Talibin* are particularly well-known. In *Dastur-ul-Amal* he has made a mention of seven spiritual stages. The ancient Hindu *rishis* considered passing through these stages as necessary for God-realization.¹

Inayat Shah lived in Lahore, so he was called Inayat Shah Lahori. He belonged to the *Arain*² caste and earned his living through agriculture or gardening. He also lived in Qasur for some time, but due to the animosity of the ruler of Qasur he shifted to Lahore, where he remained till the end of his life. His tomb is also situated near Lahore. In *Bang-i-Auliya-i-Hind* we find the following reference about him:

From the tribe of gardeners was brother Shah Inayat,
He received honor from Shah Raza Wali Allah.

1. *Punjab*, Language Department Punjab, Patiala, p. 424.

2. An agriculturist community among Muslims.

He earned his living in the small town of
 Qasur Pathana.
 The ruler Husein Khan of this town was his
 arch enemy.
 From there Inayat Shah came to the city of Lahore;
 Two miles to the south of the city he made
 his habitation.
 It is at this place that we find his tomb.
 In 1141¹ he departed from this world.

It is said that even before coming in contact with Inayat Shah, Bulleh Shah used to do some spiritual practice, and had acquired certain miraculous powers. When Bulleh Shah, the seeker, passed near the small field of Inayat Shah, he saw fruit laden trees on both sides of the road. Inayat Shah himself was engaged in planting onion seedlings. It occurred to Bulleh Shah to test Inayat Shah of his spiritual power. Invoking the name of God, Bullah² looked at the trees, and the fruit started falling on the ground. Inayat Shah looked back and saw that unripe fruit was falling from the trees without any reason. He immediately realized that it was due to the mischief played by the young man passing by. He looked towards Bulleh Shah and said, "Well, young man, why have you brought down the unripe fruit from the trees?" This is what Bulleh Shah wanted, to find an opportunity to talk to Inayat Shah. He went up to him and said, "Sir, I neither climbed up the trees, nor did I throw any stones at the fruit, how could I tear it from the trees?" Inayat Shah cast a full glance at Bulleh Shah and said, "O, you are not only a thief, you are also being

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1. This is according to the Muslim calendar, the equivalent of which in Christian calendar is 1728.
 2. Bulleh Shah is simply referred to as "Bullah" when "Shah" is not used.

clever!" Inayat's glance was so penetrating that it touched Bullah's heart and he instantly fell at his feet. Inayat Shah asked him his name and the purpose for coming to him. Bullah replied, "Sir, my name is Bullah and I wish to know how I can realize God." Inayat Shah said, "Why do you look down? Get up and look at me." As soon as Bullah raised his head and looked at Inayat Shah, the Master again cast at him a full glance, laden with love, shaking him all through. He said "O Bullah, what problem is there in finding God? It only needs to be uprooted from here and planted there." This was enough for Bulleh Shah. He got what he had wished for.

Inayat Shah had poured the essence of spirituality in these few words. He conveyed to Bulleh Shah that the secret of spiritual progress lay in detaching one's mind from the world outside and attaching it to God within. In *Bang-i-Auliya-i-Hind* this instance has been described as below:

"In the city of Qasur Pathana it happened to a man of God, a descendent of prophet Mohammed, the grandson¹ of Pir Jilani, that he achieved greatness from Hazrat Shah Inayat whose tomb lies in Lahore, south of the city. Bulleh Shah said to himself, "I must get my Master after testing him. I must fully satisfy myself, I must drink water after straining it." In his intense search for his Master he first looked towards Lahore, then he came there and took his residence, where the garden of Shah Inayat was situated. There he saw a mango on a tree at that time, he looked at it, invoked the name of God, and the mango fell on the ground. Shah Inayat gave a

1. He was a disciple of a disciple, Hazrat Jilani.

call to him and said, "Listen, you wayfarer, you have stolen my mango. Give it back to me." Bulleh Shah replied, "I did not climb up the tree; your mangoes are far from my reach. It is with the wind that the mango broke from the branch and came into my lap." "Invoking the name of God, you got the mango. You have committed a theft." Bulleh Shah realized the spiritual power and knowledge of Inayat Shah. He fell at his feet, was graced by initiation from the Master and attained the secret knowledge."

Bulleh Shah's meeting with the Master, getting initiation from him and being deeply impressed has been described by a scholar in these words:

"Bulleh Shah had all those virtues in him which Shah Inayat was looking for in a disciple. He opened his inner treasure and placed it before him. . . He got the vision, he became oblivious of his surroundings, and in that state of rapture he proclaimed the gift of his inner grace in the manner of Mansur."

Bulleh Shah started to pass his time in a state of strange ecstasy. In the company of his Master and with the practice of the path he had been shown, Bulleh Shah's spiritual condition started changing day by day. His *kafi*, "Whatever color I am dyed in" makes it clear how great was the effect of his Master on him. In it he mentions that his inner eye had been opened, all his doubts had been removed, and he had been blessed with the light of Realization. Through the grace of his Master he had the vision of the Lord within and that for him no difference existed between his Master and the Lord.

1. Sunder Singh Narula (Editor), *Sain Bulleh Shah*, Amritsar, 1931, p. 9.

The effect of his Master on him was so profound that but for his Master nothing else mattered to him. He became strangely selfless and impervious to affairs of the world. Prof. Puran Singh has described an interesting incident of this phase of Bulleh Shah's life in his book, *The Spirit of Oriental Poetry*.¹ One day he saw a young girl whose husband was expected to come home, and in whose preparation she was putting plaits in her hair. A strange desire arose in his mind. He also dressed himself like that woman, put the same type of plaits in his hair, and went in this guise to meet his Master. For the worldly people such an act would look ridiculous, but it shows not only the great love for his Master but also his unconcern with public opinion and his desire to sacrifice himself for his beloved. In the manner of true lovers he shed his masculine pride and assumed the form of a helpless woman, who renounces her ego and surrenders herself completely to her lord.

Whatever questions and doubts Bulleh Shah had in his mind before he met his Master, were all drowned in the experience of his inner light. When he had made up his mind to come to Inayat Shah, people had dissuaded him from doing so, saying "You are a great scholar, a master of miraculous powers and a descendent of prophet Mohammed. Does it seem right to you to go to an ordinary gardener of low caste and become his disciple? Is it not shameful?" But his Master was true to his name.² He showered such grace on Bulleh Shah that a single glance of his made him saturated with spiritual light. In ecstatic gratitude Bullah proclaimed: "O Bullah, if you seek the pleasure of a garden in spring, go

1. Page 15.

2. 'Inayat' literally means favor or bounty.

and become a servant of the *Arain*.” Bulleh Shah held the hem of his Master’s cloak so firmly that he never let it go from his hand for the rest of his life. All of Bulleh Shah’s compositions are suffused with love and gratitude for his Master. In this love he identified his Master with the Lord. He has addressed Shah Inayat with such words as guide, as one who unites people with God, besides calling him spouse, husband, Lord, friend, and beloved.

1. He listens to my tale of woe ;
Shah Inayat guides me and takes me across.
(*Week*)

- 2 a. Shah Inayat is my Master, who has come
to grace me.
All my wrangles and strifes are over.
Who can now delude me ?
(*Acrostic*)

- b. Bullah has fallen in love with the Lord.
He has given his life and body as earnest.
His Lord and Master is Shah Inayat
who has captivated his heart.
(*Baran Maha*)

- c. He pervades in everyone.
Shah Inayat himself showed it,
And then alone I could see.
(*Baran Maha*)

- 3 a. Inayat will come to my nuptial couch ;
I am in great delight.
(*Knot*)

- b. My friends have come to congratulate me.
Shah Inayat, my Lord, has fulfilled my hopes.
(*Baran Maha*)

- c. I left my parents to take your shelter,
 O my beloved King Inayat !
 Now honor this bond of love,
 For I am entirely in your hands.
 Pray, walk into my courtyard !

(*Kafī*)

- d. Come Love, fold me in your arms,
 Why this estrangement ? Says Bullah :
 Ever since I found Shah Inayat,
 The Lord has taken abode in me.

(*Kafī*)

- e. Bulleh Shah has no caste ;
 He has found Shah Inayat.

(*Kafī*)

He calls his Master the Lord of the soul and the philosopher's stone, which can turn iron into gold.

O Bullah, my Lord Inayat knows God,
 He is the Master of my heart.
 I am iron, he is the philosopher's stone.

Again, "The Master is an adept in swimming, who can take across an inept and helpless woman."¹

Bullah also calls him the one who can embellish the soul with spiritual apparel and jewelery and transform a widow into a bride.

O Bullah, the Lord brought me to the door of Inayat,
 Who embellished me with clothes green and red.

1. cf. Bullah was not worthy of the Lord but Shah Inayat took him across.

For a distinguished scholar, who belonged to the line of prophet Mohammed, to accept an ordinary vegetable grower as his Master was a very extraordinary event in the social conditions of Bulleh Shah's times. It was like an explosion which shook the prevailing social structure. Bullah had to suffer the taunts and ridicule not only of men of his religion, clan and caste, but also of all members of his family. He says :

1. O, what has love done to me?
People hurl at me taunts and rebukes.
2. For the sake of my true friend,
I have to bear the reproaches of people.
3. To admonish Bullah came his sisters and
sisters-in-law,
"Why have you brought disgrace to the prophet
and to the progeny of Ali? ¹
Listen to our advice, O Bullah, and leave the hem
of the Arain's skirt."

Bullah preached fearlessly that the guidance of a Master was indispensable for spiritual realization, and the caste of the Master did not at all matter in this pursuit. Even if he belonged to the lowest caste, his help would still remain indispensable. Thus, he proclaimed at the top of his voice that pride in being a Sayyid would land one in hell, and the one who held the skirt of a Master like Inayat Shah would enjoy the pleasures of heaven.

Let anyone, who calls me a Sayyid,
be punished with tortures of hell,
And let him revel in the pleasures of heaven,
who labels me an *Arain*.

¹ One of the four Caliphs and the son-in-law of prophet Mohammed.

If you seek the pleasures of the spring season,
become a slave of the *Arain*.

An interesting incident of this period in the life of Bulleh Shah presents a graphic picture of his ecstasy, generosity and fearlessness of public opinion. It is said that as a result of disgust from people's attitude, Bulleh Shah purchased a few donkeys so that people should ridicule him. They started calling him "The man with donkeys." During those days, a poor man's wife was abducted by a Muslim Chieftain.¹ In despair, the husband went to Bulleh Shah, and asked for his help in recovering his beloved wife. After a few moments spent in thought, Bulleh Shah told the man, "Go and see, my friend, if there is any music or dance going on somewhere nearabout." The man soon came back and reported that a group of eunuchs was dancing in the village nearby, accompanied by a band of musicians. "That is good," said Bulleh Shah. "Come now and sit on one of my donkeys, and we shall both go to watch the dance." As soon as the saint arrived at the dance, he joined the group and also started dancing. He got into an ecstasy and asked the man, "Where does the Muslim Chieftain live?" The man told him that he lived in a certain part of the city near the orchard of dates and the grove of mangoes. Then Bulleh Shah called out with directed attention :

There is a mango grove, it is said,
and an orchard of dates.
The owner of donkeys calls you,
Wake up, if you are asleep.

1. *Tales of the Mystic East*, Radha Soami Satsang Beas, pp. 183-185.

Sorrel is thus hulled in the mortar,
Sorrel is thus hulled, my friend !

The moment he uttered these words, the abducted woman ran out from the nearby garden and came to Bulleh Shah. Bulleh Shah stopped dancing and called to the husband, "Here is your beloved wife, brother ! Take her home and guard her well."

Then once more wrapped in ecstasy, he continued to dance to the bewitching music. The gossips lost no time in going to Bulleh Shah's father, an orthodox Muslim, and told him all that had happened. Not only was his son now hiring out donkeys, but he had also started to dance with the eunuchs. Greatly distressed and enraged, the saint's father, with a rosary in one hand and a staff in the other, hastened to the place where his son was dancing. "Ah ! it is you, father," said Bulleh Shah as he heard his name called. He looked at his father intently and began to sing :

People have only chaplets but my father has a rosary.
The whole of his life he has toiled hard,
But has not been able to uproot a single hair.¹
Sorrel is thus hulled in the mortar.
Sorrel is thus hulled, my friend !

As the son, filled with spiritual ardor, gazed at his father, the inner eye of the father was opened and he had a divine vision. With a serene and radiant smile on his face, he joined his son in the ecstatic dancing and singing, and as he danced, he sang over and over again :

1. He has not been able to achieve anything.

Blessed are the parents whose sons
 are dyed in such divine color !
 They bring salvation even to their parents.
 Sorrel is thus hulled in the mortar.
 Sorrel is thus hulled, my friend !

The beginning of love is fascinating, but its path is difficult and its destination far. Even a small error or omission on the part of the lover can become a cause of great annoyance for the beloved. That creates a mountain of calamities for the lover. Such a thing happened to Bulleh Shah, when his Master got annoyed with him for an omission on his part.

Some writers have attributed the reason for his Master's annoyance to Bulleh Shah's open criticism of rituals and customs practiced by Muslims, and this was not to the liking of Inayat Shah. This reason, however, does not appear plausible, because criticism of external observances is common to all Sufi saints, and it was not unknown in the Qadiri tradition. They were certainly not the worshippers of this system.

The second reason given for the annoyance is quite different in nature. It is said that once Bulleh Shah invited his Master on the marriage of one of his relatives. The Saint deputed one of his disciples to represent him at the function. This disciple belonged to the *Arain* caste and was poorly clad. Now, Bulleh Shah's family was proud of belonging to the clan of Sayyids. They did not give proper attention in receiving this poorly clad man. Even Bulleh happened to make this omission. At least he should have shown proper respect to the representative of his Master. But under the pressure of his family or the fear of public opinion, he did not give the guest due honor. When the disciple

returned from the marriage, the Saint asked him how the marriage was celebrated. He told his Master the whole story, and complained that because of his low caste and tattered clothes, neither Bulleh Shah nor his family showed him due respect. The Saint replied, "How dare Bullah behave like this?" And then added, "What have we to get from this useless man? We shall change the direction of the flow of water from his fields to yours!" He had only to utter these words to bring a calamity in Bullah's life. As soon as the Master changed the direction of his grace, his spring turned into autumn. His inner visions vanished, leaving him dry and barren. Light changed into darkness and bliss into mourning. It was a stunning blow to Bullah.

One who has never experienced inner bliss and who has never had a glimpse of the divine glory of his Master within, his case is quite different. But the one who has enjoyed the wealth of inner experience and who is suddenly deprived of this treasure, he alone knows the pangs of such a torture. In fact, the lord of spiritual wealth is the perfect Master, and there is nothing in the hands of the disciple. Apparently, the disciple is himself seeking the Master, and with his own effort treads the path and progresses on it, as shown by the Master. But, in reality the disciple cannot search for the Master with his mind and meager intellect, nor can he find the true path with his own power and cleverness. Nor can he rise to spiritual realms with his own endeavor. Finding the true path and achieving spiritual progress are all gifts of the Master's grace. Bulleh Shah has himself written, "The Guru does whatever he wills." But to realize this truth he had to suffer the annoyance of his Master and to cross the frightening ocean of the fire of separation.

As soon as his spiritual experiences were stopped, Bullah hastened to his Master, but the Master turned his back on him and asked him to leave the place. For one thing, the annoyance of his Master, for another the command not to see him! What greater torture could there be for a disciple? Bullah was miserable. He began to burn in the fire of repentance, and his condition was like that of a fish out of water.

In the compositions of Bullah, many references can be found of this heart-rending state of his mind. In many of his *kafis* there is a touch of his personal life. No one can say with certainty when these *kafis* were written. But the descriptions in these poems bespeak of such a mental state. The pain of separation erupts in them like turbulent waves. "In poignancy of emotion, sincerity of feeling, ardor and longing, these *kafis* are matchless."¹

From the *kafi* given below it is evident that the memory of the bliss of union with the beloved and the pain of separation from him are continuing to burn Bullah to ashes like a house on fire. He cannot give up love, but in the separation of his beloved, he can find peace neither by day nor by night. He is not blessed with the sight of his beloved, but without seeing him, fire rages within his breast, and his heart is breaking. It is hard to bear such a state of mind, but it is also impossible to relinquish love. So he hangs between life and death:

I have been pierced by the arrow of love,
 what shall I do?
 I can neither live, nor can I die.

1. *History of Punjabi Literature*, Language Deptt., Patiala, Sufi Poetry (Medieval) p. 60..

Listen ye to my ceaseless outpourings,
 I have peace neither by night, nor by day.
 I cannot do without my Beloved even for a moment.
 I have been pierced by the arrow of love,
 what shall I do?

The fire of separation is unceasing !
 Let someone take care of my love.
 How can I be saved without seeing him ?
 I have been pierced by the arrow of love,
 what shall I do?

O Bullah, I am in dire trouble !
 Let someone come to help me out.
 How shall I endure such torture ?
 I have been pierced by the arrow of love,
 what shall I do?
 I can neither live, nor can I die.

In another *kafī* he describes his pain thus :

He left me, and himself he departed ;
 What fault was there in me ?

Neither at night nor in the day do I sleep in peace ;
 My eyes pour out tears !
 Sharper than swords and spears
 are the arrows of love !
 There is no one as cruel as love ;
 This malady no physician can cure.
 There is no peace, not for a moment,
 So intense is the pain of separation !
 O Bullah, if the Lord were to shower His grace,
 My days would radically change !

He left me, and himself he departed.
 What fault was there in me ?

As the period of separation became longer, Bullah's condition became worse. On the one hand, there was the pain of separation, on the other, the ridicule of people. He prostrates before the memory of his Master, and repeatedly entreats him to show his face to him at the earliest.

Why do you tarry, my Beloved ?
 O Bullah, now narrate your love story.
 He alone knows who has experienced love.
 There are rebukes within, taunts without
 Such is the comfort I have found in love !
 My eyes have taken to the habit of weeping.
 For one, it is death, for another, reproach from the
 world.
 The pain of separation has tightly squeezed my life.
 O Love, I have cried out my heart in anguish !

Bullah was full of repentance over his blunder. He was keenly desirous to be forgiven by his Master. In his mind he pleads to his Master to heal his wound of separation, and to apply balm to his heart by showing his face to him.

I suffer from the pain of my mad love.
 Come, dear Ranjha, cast a glance at me,
 and forgive me my faults.
 From the throne of Hazara set out Ranjha,
 the Master of artless Heer.
 The bridegroom visits the homes of all others ;
 What is the flaw that vitiates Bullah ?

Bullah does not only describe the state of his suffering, but also hurls complaints at his Master. On the one hand, he regrets his own lack of wisdom, on the

other, he reproaches his Master, who, after piercing his heart with the arrow of love, has hidden himself and has never inquired after him.

Inflicting a wound you hid your face;
 Who has taught you such thefts, my Love?
 With your fancy you captivated my heart,
 But then you never showed your face.
 This cup of poison I have drunk myself;
 Indeed I was unripe in wisdom!

He calls his Master “the beloved Thug of Lahore” and complains that he has robbed him with his love, and made him useless for the world.

Never be taken in by its guiles;
 It gives not peace in forest or city.
 When the traveler left after casting a glance,
 Suddenly a noose was hung round my neck.
 He then showed no concern for me.
 Oh, I have met the “beloved Thug of Lahore”!

“To be incessantly weeping in separation of his Master had become the usual routine for Bullah. This separation of his had assumed the proportions of madness, and he started roaming in streets and lanes. The intense longing to see his Master produced a kind of fire within him, to extinguish which he began to think out some plans.”¹ He knew that his Master was a lover of music. It is said² that Bullah put on the garb of a woman, got hold of a *sarangi*³ and went to the house of

1. Jit Singh Sital: *Bulleh Shah*, p. 26

2. Maula Baksh Kushta, *Punjabi Shairan-da-Tazkara*, p. 104.

3. A musical instrument, like a fiddle.

a dancing girl. He learnt dancing from her and became an adept in it. He then took along with him a drummer and a harmonium player and went to the tomb of a holy man in whose memory an annual function was being celebrated. Shah Inayat had also come to attend it. While all other dancers and singers got tired and sat down, Bullah, in ecstasy, continued to dance. His voice was extremely doleful and heart-rending. It is said that Bullah sang many *kafis* on the occasion. At last even Inayat Shah's heart melted. With a voice full of compassion he said, "Are you Bullah?" Bullah ran and fell at his Master's feet and replied with his eyes full of tears, "Sir, I am not Bullah but *Bhulla*."¹

The Master is never indifferent to his disciple. When he realized that the fire of repentance and separation had purified Bullah and turned him into pure gold, he forgave him his lapse and pressed him to his heart.

The reason why the Master put Bulleh Shah to such a hard test—the torture of burning in the fire of separation and longing—was to make him fit to receive the invaluable wealth of the Word of God. With this spiritual treasure he was not only to become rich himself, but also to make other seekers the recipients of this wealth.

When the fountain of the Master's grace started flowing once again, the arid fields of Bullah began to revive, and the fragrance of the flowers of bliss spread all around. According to the author² of *Qanun-i-Ishq*, the Master pressed Bullah to his heart, took him along with him, and intoxicated him with the wine of union. Bullah's soul got dyed in the hue of his Master's soul, so

1. In Punjabi, one who had gone astray. There is a pun on the word 'Bullah'.

2. Anwar Ali Rohtaki; *Qanun-i-Ishq*, p. 177.

that no distinction remained between the two. One of Bulleh Shah's *kafis* gives a graphic description of his state of merging in the Master (*Fana-fil-Sheikh*):

Repeating the name of Ranjha I have become
 Ranjha myself.
 O call me ye all "Dhido-Ranjha," let no one
 call me Heer.
 Ranjha is in me, I am in Ranjha,
 no other thought exists in my mind.
 I am not, He alone is. He alone is amusing himself.

The Master is one with the Lord. So, merging in the Master is transformed into merging in the Lord. This state is expressed by Bullah in the following lines of two *kafis*:

1. You alone exist, I do not, O Beloved!
2. Repeating the name of the Beloved
 I have become the Beloved myself.
 Whom shall I call the Beloved now?

The same thought is conveyed by Jesus Christ in the the *Bible* thus:

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father,
 and ye in me, and I in you.¹

Arriving at this stage, the illusion of duality disappears, and the glory of the Beloved is seen to pervade everywhere. Bulleh Shah declares that love for the Lord has so radically changed him that his individual self or

1. John 14:20

ego has been totally eliminated. He has now realized his true Self hidden behind the veil of the physical body. His identification with the Supreme Being has opened for him the floodgates of divine light. In this light no one has remained a stranger. All have become His own.

I have got lost in the city of love,
 I am being cleansed, withdrawing myself
 from my head, hands and feet.
 I have got rid of my ego, and have
 attained my goal.
 Thus it has all ended well.
 O Bullah, the Lord pervades both the worlds;
 None now appears a stranger to me.

In the transcendence of the finite to the Infinite; all disputes of religion, of good and evil, disappear. To Bullah now all began to appear as virtuous; none seemed to him as evil or a stranger.

Remove duality and do away with all disputes;
 The Hindus and Muslims are not other than He.
 Deem everyone virtuous, there are no thieves.
 For, within every body He himself resides.
 How the Trickster has put on a mask!

Saturated with the love of God, Bullah became the personification of compassion and forgiveness. He began to see the divine in every being, and distinctions of caste and religion, friend and foe, ceased to have any meaning for him. The following incident of his life illustrates this sublime state of his mind in a beautiful way:

It is said¹ that “once Bulleh Shah was engaged in meditation inside his chamber. It was the month of Ramzan.² Some of his disciples were sitting outside eating carrots. After some time a group of orthodox Muslims who were keeping the fast happened to pass them. When they saw the disciples sitting at a faqir’s abode and violating the fast, they were enraged.” They shouted in an angry voice, “Are you not ashamed of eating in the month of Ramzan, and that also at the abode of a faqir?” The disciples replied, “Brother believers, take your path. We are feeling hungry. That is why we are eating.”

The group of believers felt suspicious about their faith. So they asked, “Who are you?” They replied, “We are Muslims. Don’t the Muslims feel hungry?”. The believers again commanded them to stop eating, but the disciples did not heed. The believers who were on horses, alighted. They snatched the carrots from the hands of the disciples, and threw them away. They also gave a few blows to them. As they were about to leave, it struck them that the *pir* of these impious people must have been cast in the same mould. So they turned back to ask him what kind of instruction he had given to his disciples. They went to his chamber and said, “Who are you?” Bullah who was meditating with his eyes closed, raised his arms and moved his hands. They asked him again, “Why don’t you speak? Who are you?” Bullah once again raised his arms. The riders taking him to be a mad man, went away. Soon after they left, the disciples entered the chamber, raising a hue and cry that they had

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1. *History of Punjabi Literature* (Medieval), Language Deptt. Patiala, 1963, Sufism, p. 64.
 2. Muslims keep fast for a month in a year, which is called the month of Ramzan. They eat only once a day, in the evening, during Ramzan.

been beaten. Bullah told them that they must have done something to provoke the believers. The disciples denied to have done any such thing. Bullah said, "What did they ask you?" The disciples replied, "They asked us who we were, and we said we were Muslims." Bullah retorted, "That's why you were beaten. You became *something* and you suffered. I didn't become anything, and they said nothing to me."

To consider oneself something emanates from the sense of ego. Such a person is still under the sway of maya, and has not had a vision of Truth so far. One who has had such a vision comes to know his true Self and gets liberated from the bondage of caste, religion and country. There are numerous instances in the poems of Bulleh Shah, which show that the soul, like the Lord, has no religion, no caste, no country. All these distinctions are born out of time and space, but the soul is unborn and timeless. It has neither a beginning, nor an end, nor is it bound by the limitations of caste and religion. Bullah recognizes only the primeval relationship of soul with God :

I take myself to be the beginning and the end;
I do not recognize aught except the One.

Having realized the Truth within, Bulleh Shah became the embodiment of Truth himself. He spent the rest of his life in disseminating the message of this Reality. Till the end of his sojourn in this transient world he was engaged in meditation of the Lord, and guided all those who came in contact with him, on the same path. His magnetic personality, his pure living and his divine writings spread his fame far and wide. Many a seeker after Truth was attracted by his charm and

derived much spiritual gain under his guidance. The last years of his life he passed in Qasur, and here he died in 1758-1759. His tomb can be seen in Qasur even today. It is mentioned in *Bang-i-Auliya-i-Hind* :

When 1171 (Hijiri)¹ had come to pass,
In Qasur his shrine was well raised.

Bulleh Shah was an evolved soul, a perfect faqir and a true lover. Through the love for his Master he realized the Lord. In his love one finds poignancy, ardor and longing besides sincerity, sacrifice and renunciation. Under the canopy of love he made his offerings of caste and learning. His love for his Master never wavered for a moment despite the fire of separation and longing through which he passed. His writings, as also his life, manifest transcendence of physical love (of the Master) to divine love (of the Lord). Indeed, this is the path of all true mystics, all true lovers of God.

Whosoever has attained union with the Lord has done so by traveling on this path, and whosoever will attain this union, will do so by becoming a traveler on this path of love. Bulleh Shah's life and writings are replete with subtle secrets of the path. They do not only strengthen the love of a true lover, but also encourage him to undergo the severest hardships for reaching the spiritual goal. The life and compositions of Bulleh Shah will serve as a lighthouse for times immemorial to true seekers of spiritual realization.

1. Muslim Calendar.

SECTION
TWO

TEACHINGS

Teachings

Bulleh Shah has been considered the greatest Sufi poet of Punjab. What does the term 'Sufi' signify? The generally accepted view is that the word is derived from 'suf' or wool. The members of the fraternity of Sufis, a Muslim mystic sect, used to wear a coarse woolen cloak. So they came to be called Sufis. The basic tenet of their philosophy was the realization of God through certain mystic practices, in which intellect and senses played hardly any part. Consequently, the emphasis of Sufism was on practice rather than theory. Through their spiritual practices, the Sufis sought to bring their mind under their control and to eliminate the sense of ego from within themselves, which is said to be the major stumbling block in God-realization.

Since the Sufis have been opposed to the dogma of religion, the term "Sufi" has also come to be used for freethinkers. And, since they see God pervading everywhere and in all beings, they have also been called pantheists. They see the One, all-pervading, everlasting Reality hidden behind the many ever-changing appearances of this world. According to them, man can achieve this transcendental state beyond time and space through mystic realization. Indeed, it is the multiple aim of Sufism to raise man from the gross to the subtle, from the many to the One, from change to permanence, from the partial to the complete and from the ever-recurring suffering to the never-ending bliss. Bulleh Shah's writings are powerful portrayals of all these aspects.

An accepted principle of spirituality is: Mind and the senses are only instruments of the soul. Although the soul is activated in this world through these instruments, yet it is quite apart and independent of them. The existence of soul is neither dependent on body, mind and the senses, nor can its original nature be changed by them. In the *Qura'n* it is stated that soul is a part of God.¹ It possesses all the attributes of God. By association with mind and maya all its native qualities have been suppressed. By removing the curtain its associates have raised, the soul can regain its lost splendor. All its divine qualities can once again come to the surface.

Bulleh Shah reminds the soul of its divine origin. By descending to the gross material world and by association with the body, the mind, and its senses, it has been deluded into believing that it is itself material and that it is nothing more than a physical body, mind, and its senses. He explains to the soul that it is eternal, immortal, self-luminous, conscious, and as blissful as God himself is. He exhorts it to leave the company of mind and senses and recognize its primeval form:

1. Oh Bullah, take care and recognise yourself!
You are immortal; why do you cling to the body?
2. Oh Bullah, know yourself and behold:
The light of *Sohang*² ever swings round you.
3. You are the form of bliss and unceasing
consciousness.
O Bullah, that is what the four Vedas proclaim.

1. *Qura'n*: 17:85

2. Literally, 'I am that', i.e. God and soul have the same essence. Mansur's statement "I am the Truth", and "I am that" have the same meaning. It hints at the liberated soul and not one imprisoned in body, mind, and senses.

4. Oh Bullah, recognize your own true self.
You are ever lasting bliss, you are resplendent light.

Bulleh Shah has raised the question of the origin of man in one of his well-known *kafis*. Says he:

Whence did you come? Whither are you going?
Which is your abode?

In another equally famous *kafi* he poses the question of the reality of man. He gives a long list of entities of what he is not and what people generally take him to be:

O Bullah, what do I know who I am?
I am not among believers seen in mosques;
Nor am I versed in the traditions of unbelief.
I am not among the pious, nor among the sinful.
I am neither Moses, nor am I a Pharaoh.
I am not in the Vedas, nor in other holy books.
I am not among hemp-eaters or wine-drinkers.
I am not among profligates, nor among libertines.
I am neither among the awake, nor among the sleeping.
I am impervious to joy as well as sorrow.
I am not among the virtuous, nor among the wicked.
I am neither of water, nor of earth.
I am neither of fire, nor of air.
I am not from Arabia, nor from Lahore.
I am not from India, nor from the city of Nagore.
I am not a Hindu, nor a Muslim from Peshawar.
Nor do I reside in the city of Nadaun.
I have not solved the mystery of religion,
Nor am I a progeny of Adam and Eve;

Nor have I a specific name of my own.

I am neither among the settled, nor among the
roaming.

All the distinctions mentioned above are based on contingent qualities and are not essential or necessary. The contingent qualities are those which could have been different. The religion to which one belongs, the parents one is born to, the place one is born at, could all have been different. So they cannot constitute the essence of man. The elements of earth, water, fire, and air are all perishable. They cannot be the reality of man either.

After giving the long list of negative objects which cannot be the reality of man, Bullah himself gives the positive answer of what man really is, in the last stanza of the poem:

I take myself to be the beginning and the end ;
I do not recognize aught except the One.

The reality of man is that which has neither beginning nor end. In other words it is timeless, not subject to change. This entity is the soul; it can be neither the body, nor the mind, nor the senses. And the essence of the soul is the same as that of God. So the reality of man is divine. He is God in essence.

Doubtless, the soul comes to the physical world in the garb of a human being. Nevertheless, it comes from high spiritual regions and from the ultimate Reality. It has the capacity to rise to those heights from which it has descended, and regain its lost freedom:

I am unfettered! I am unshackled!
I am neither a patient, nor a physician.

I am neither a believer, nor an infidel;
 I am neither a lord, nor a serf.
 I walk freely in the fourteen worlds.
 I am not in chains, anywhere.

It is written in the Bible that "God created man in His own image."¹ Surely, this similarity between God and man is not due to the five elements with which the human body is constituted. It is only the light of the soul within, which relates man to God. Indeed, it is the purpose of human life to make its potential divinity an actuality. Bulleh Shah says that man has forgotten his real form and divine home after coming into the realm of mind and maya. In this deluded state he is no longer aware that his existence is dependent on the all-powerful, all-knowing God, who is also the fountain of bliss. One who is ignorant of his native state of boundless power, and who flounders and is tossed about in a strange land, how can he hope to find peace and happiness?

Bulleh Shah in his *kafi* "Arise! Awake! Do not snore!" has called the soul of man "unmindful," "neglectful," "asleep," "in slumber," and "snoring." He has also denounced it as "prideful," "intoxicated with youth," "intoxicated with beauty," "engulfed in pleasure," "garrulous," "inept," and "shameless." Bulleh Shah has used all these epithets to warn man not to get engrossed in this world, for it is only his temporary sojourn. His true home is elsewhere, and the path to that home is beset with dangers and wilderness. And, there will be none to guide or keep him company when he departs from this world. Even powerful monarchs such as

1. Genesis 1:26-27

Alexander, sages full of wisdom like Solomon, the great prophets and seers and lovers like Yusuf and Zulaikha, had all to leave this place. The tulip and the rose, the jasmine and the lily could not stay for long. It is the world of transience: Only God is abiding. Love for Him and His Word or Nam can take the soul back to Him.

In his *kafī* "Put your mind in spinning, O girl!" Bulleh Shāh impresses upon man the necessity and the urgency of collecting spiritual wealth in this world, which will serve as the dowry for his soul, when he leaves this world for the next. In another *kafī* on the same theme, "Do your spinning, O girl, and roam not aimlessly," he says:

If you go without a dowry to your in-laws,
You will not be liked by anyone there.
How will you ever please your Spouse?
Take counsel from dervishes, O girl.

O Bullah, if the Spouse were to come to my house,
Then alone the set of bracelets and the betel leaf
would be pleasing.

If I have any virtue, He would clasp me to his heart,
Or else I shall weep bitter tears of blood.

The *Adi Granth* is also full of such warnings. For instance, Guru Tegh Bahadur states emphatically that foolish man, in delusion, takes the false for the true, the transient for the permanent. Says he :

1. For the sake of maya, foolish people run wild.
Says Nanak, without meditation on the Lord,
life has been spent in vain.

M. 9, p. 1427

2. Entangled in maya, the mind has forsaken
the Name of God.

Says Nanak, of what use is life
without meditation on the Lord.

M. 9. p. 1427

Bulleh Shah considers the material world as “the garden of safflower blossoms.” These blossoms are as bright, colorful and attractive as they are short-lived and painful. Sheikh Farid has written that they give a burning sensation to the hand which touches them. Their fine thorns also appear to be pleasant because of the attractive color of its blossoms, but their sting is quite poisonous. “The thorns of safflower are fine and sharp. Again and again they tear my veil.” Man in his colossal ignorance goes on collecting piles of “safflower blossoms,” whereas not a single blossom can accompany him when he leaves the world. “O, I am sick of picking safflower blossoms.” That is to say that man, ever since he came into existence and passed through countless lives, has been making vain attempts to gather material goods and conquer this world. There is only one way for him to cross the turbulent waters of this world: he should find a perfect Master, who would hold him by the hand and ferry him across the stormy ocean:

I am mean, I am inept, I am ugly,
I am indeed devoid of all virtues;
I am not worthy of the Lord, O Bullah;
But my spouse, Inayat, has redeemed me!
I am sick of picking safflower blossoms!

On the transience of this world and of human existence Bulleh Shah says that whatever is visible to the eyes is “a rose-garden of four days’ duration.” The world is short-lived. The human body itself is nothing more than a heap of clay, which will disintegrate one day. He

brings out this truth in the following *kafi* in his own inimitable style:

Hail! the rose garden of earth is wondrous!
 The apparel is of earth, the steed is of earth;
 And of earth is the rider.
 The earth makes the earth flee;
 Of earth is all clamor.
 Earth is at war with earth;
 Of earth are all weapons.
 The earth with much earth over it,
 Is the earth full of pride.
 Earth has come to behold earth,
 Of earth is all splendor.
 That which laughed and played is earth again;
 It now sleeps with legs outstretched.
 O Bullah, if you were to solve this mystery,
 You would cast aside your ego and pride.

Some other *kafis* which emphasize the same truth, i.e., the transitory nature of physical existence and reminders to man not to idle away precious time, start with the following opening lines:

1. Dust will mingle with dust!¹
 How illusive are power and vanity!
2. The night is over! The stars have waned.
 Wake up, O ye dear traveler!

1. We also find similar quotations in the Bible: All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again to dust. (Job 34:15)
 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (Eccl. 3:20)
 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (Eccl. 12:7) (see also p. 206)

Quoting verses from the holy *Qura'n*, he stresses that man is "the top of all creation." God's own light shines in him. He should not waste his time in frivolity. He must know himself :

1. You have been made worthy to go back to heaven.¹
You have been given the top status in all creation.
2. O man, look, how high is the position I have
given you!

To attain the high position which God has ordained for him, he should concentrate on the meditation of the Lord. For such meditation Bulleh Shah uses the analogy of spinning. In his *kafis* the spinning wheel is the symbol for the human body; and the act of spinning stands for meditation. In the following *kafi* he impresses upon man the extreme privilege that God has showered on him by giving him the human body, and it becomes incumbent on him to make full use of this rare gift :

Put your mind in spinning, O girl!
The spinning wheel you have got free.
You have paid nothing to obtain it.
You do not realize its immense value,
For you have got it so easily!
This wheel has a heavy price!
What would you know, O you rustic girl?
You are haughty and you strut in conceit,
Enveloped in your own self-importance.
Why have you let such a wheel go waste?
Why have you thrown it on a rubbish heap?
Ever since it came into your hands,
You did not ply it for a moment, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

1. True home; ultimate destination.

A number of *kafis* have been written by Bulleh Shah on the transitoriness of this world. He compares it to a caravan-serai, where people come and go in an unending stream. Here are a few examples from his writings :

1. This is your camping ground in a caravan-serai,
Where people come and go ceaselessly.
All your fellow travelers are ready to leave,
And still you do not hear the clarion call.
Wake up at least now, O you dear traveler!
2. Some are born, some die;
And this cycle goes on.
3. They all filled their pitchers,
and departed on their respective turns.
More have come to fill, some have filled
and are leaving;
And some are waiting with their arms outstretched.

In Persian mystic literature Rumi and Shams-i-Tabriz make remarkably similar statements:

1. Many a time like grass have I sprung;
Eighty-four (lakhs of) bodies have I seen.

Rumi

2. Hundreds of thousands of times we came into
and we went out of this caravan-serai.
For this is a workshop where people come and
go with great fanfare.

Shams-i-Tabriz

Guru Arjun Dev in the *Adi Granth* brings out the same truth :

1. For several births were you an insect and a moth,
For several births an elephant, a fish, a deer;
For several births were you a bird, a serpent.
For several births yoked as a bull, a horse.
Meet now the Lord, for now is the time.
After ages have you been given the human body.

M. 5., p. 176

2. Eighty-four lakhs of species are there in all;
To man is given the pride of place by God.
Whosoever slips from the top rung of this ladder,
He suffers the pain of ever coming and going.

M. 5., p. 1075

And, this is how Soami Ji¹ puts it :

This body that you have been given is a priceless gift.
You have attained it after going through
millions of births;
Now do not let it go waste without its proper use.
Contemplate on the Lord, and amass spiritual wealth.

Sar Bachan, p. 127

On the impermanence of life there is an interesting dialogue mentioned in the epic, *Mahabharat*. Yaksh asked Yudhister, "What is the most astonishing thing in the world?" Yudhister replied, "The strangest thing of the world is that people daily see others die, but everyone of them suffers from the delusion that he himself is going to live for ever. Death is meant only for others. The only certain thing in life is death, and the

1. Seth Shiv Dyal Singh, founder of the Radha Soami Faith.

wonder is that people in their everyday behavior show complete skepticism about it”

THE LAW OF KARMA

The law of karma is an integral part of Indian religious and philosophical thought. It is accepted by all Indian religions and all the schools of Indian philosophy. Bulleh Shah, too, accepts it in its entirety.

The law of karma is generally believed to be arbitrary and unscientific by the Western thinker. In fact, it is quite rational and logical, if properly understood. Briefly stated, it is only an extension and a completion of the Law of Causation, which is the most important postulate of science. Causation says that every fact has a cause, and nothing can happen without it. Science, however, applies this principle only to the material world. For instance, sunshine is the cause of the melting of the snow on mountains. The Indian seers and sages have extended this principle to cover also the moral and spiritual life of man. And, it is extended to cover lives other than the present. Our actions of past lives determine our state in the present life. And, our present actions will determine the condition of our future life. Consequently, our seers have impressed upon us the desirability of leading a good moral life now, so that we should not have to suffer the result of evil deeds in lives to come. Our attitude to our misfortunes in the present life should be to accept them cheerfully, for they are the result of our own past actions.

Bulleh Shah warns us against perpetrating evil deeds in this life, so that we should not have to suffer for them in the life hereafter. The following lines from two of his

Kafis illustrate his faith in the existence of future lives and in the law of karma:

1. As you sow, so shall you reap is the custom
of the City of Love.
2. Thorns and briers, extremely sharp, cling to me.
I carry with me my future woes;
To whom shall I give my old ones?

One becomes a tyrant and acts cruelly only because he is not aware or concerned about the bitter fruit of his actions:

1. Having enjoyed yourself for the fleeting four days,
You will at last be humbled, for sure.
You act cruelly and inflict suffering on people;
O, leave the practice of torture and tyranny.
In whomsoever you take pride and feel conceited,
None of them will ever go with you.
Ever keep in view the city of the silent.
For in that city every denizen will have to abide.
2. You eat meat, you chew betel, and you
dress like a dandy.
You wear a tilted turban, you put on foppish shoes,
and you strut proudly.
You are being nourished like a lamb to be
slaughtered by the messenger of Death.

Bulleh Shāh exposes the hypocritical life of man in various *kafis*. In the name of religion he poses as a pious man, repenting for his sins before others, but inwardly continuing to harbor evil thoughts and perpetrate wicked deeds. The following *kafi* is an excellent example of exposing such sham and cant:

You ever read, "Forgive me, O Lord!"

What repentance is this, O friend?

You give one measure and take back one and a quarter.

You have wagered to make illicit profit.

When did Islam give you such teaching?

Such are your doings! What repentance is this?

You go to places where you should not go.

You relish things which belong to others.

You falsely swear by holy books.

Such is your trust! What repentance is this?

Tyrants do not fear to act cruelly.

They perish due to their own doings.

They repent from their mouths, not from their hearts.

They disgrace themselves here and in the hereafter.

What repentance is this, O friend?

LOVE OF GOD

I write letters to my Beloved, for I do not see Him.

My courtyard has become frightening,

O, how shall I pass my night?

How can man be liberated from the bondage of mind and māya? His attachment to the material world does not let him break its shackles. The only way to break these chains is to have a more powerful attachment. This is what happens to the lovers of God. So strong is the love of God in saints and mystics that love of the world pales into insignificance before it. The intensity of this love is further inflamed by separation of and longing for the Beloved. A true lover of God becomes oblivious of his surroundings. All that matters to him is his Beloved. Nor is he concerned with orthodox and dogmatic

religion. He is indifferent to faith or lack of it in the generally accepted sense of the terms. Says Farid-ud-Din Attar:

Paganism is for the pagan and faith for the faithful;
A bit of heartache is enough for Attar!

Sages and seers, mystics and saints of all ages have revealed the truth in their works and their teachings that attachment to the world and its goods has entailed the suffering of going through the cycle of birth and death endlessly.

Man is a prey to his appetites and desires of this world. They are related to progeny, wealth, status, power and the like. They have small beginnings like seeds, but grow in due course of time into huge trees. The satisfaction of every desire entails hardships, pain and suffering. An unsatisfied or half-satisfied desire throws man into the well of misery, and a satisfied desire gives rise to various forms of responsibility and bondage. From a single desire are born a multiplicity of other desires with their attendant consequences. In a nutshell, man becomes an utter slave of his desires and gets tightly yoked to this world. Floodgates of carnal desires are opened in the mind of man, which deprive him of all peace of mind. He is ever in a state of agitation.

Rarely, however, is it the good fortune of a man to meet a perfect Master, as was destined for Bullah to come in contact with Inayat Shah. This meeting radically changed the direction of his life, and brought about a revolution in his scale of values. The world and its orthodox religious beliefs now meant nothing to him. Their reality—or lack of it—was unraveled, and a

longing for God-realization replaced the desires for the world.

A large number of Bulleh Shah's poems manifest the primeval love of the soul for the Lord. They throw hints that this phenomenon of love is not new, nor even recent. Right from the day of the beginning of Creation it has been there. Man is constantly being nagged by a feeling of loneliness, even when he is in the midst of a multitude. This is due to the longing of the soul to go back and merge into its source. Says Hafiz:

There was not a semblance of the two worlds,
when our love existed.

Time has not laid the foundation of love
in the present age.

The following lines from two of Bulleh Shah's *kafis* convey the same thought :

1. The only one I long for is Ranjha.

"Let there be, and it became!"¹

Our love was not begun in secret.

2. O friends, love was implanted in me from the
beginning,

From the beginning, from the day of eternity!

It fries me again and again in a pan,

And fries again what is already fried.

The already dead, it crucifies again.

The already bound it again binds.

As if a spark of fire has struck my body,

It pierces like a thorn in a wounded heart.

1. It refers to a verse from the *Qura'n*, which hints at creation of the world by God. Bulleh Shah indicates that ever since soul has been separated from the Lord, it has been pining for reunion with Him.

The arrow of love is stuck in my heart;
 It does not move despite all shaking.
 O Bullah, unique is the love for the Lord!
 It does not blend with any other love.

In fact, the essence of God is love, and he, who is devoid of it, can never realize the Lord. In the *Bible* it is said:

He who does not love, does not know God,
 for God is love.

I John:4.8

Although pain of separation and longing for union is the dominant strain in Bulleh Shah's poems, yet they are not altogether devoid of the bliss of union. One of the most beautiful *kafis* written in this strain is as follows:

Turn away the watchman, O friends!
 Today my Precious, my Beloved has come home.
 Again and again he strikes the gong,
 And cuts he short the night of union,
 If he were to know my heart's desire,
 He would throw away the gong, O friends.
 The Unstruck Melody resounds sweetly.
 The Musician is accomplished, the tune enchanting.
 Prayers and fasting are all forgotten,
 When the Distiller offers the cup, O friends.
 Wondrous is the sight of beholding His face!
 The pain of my heart has all disappeared.
 How to extend the length of this night?
 Place a wall against the day, O friends.

In the ecstasy of union with the beloved, the lover wishes that time should come to a stop, so that all possibilities of separation may be eliminated. There should be a never-ending spell of joy and bliss.

Love for God is so dominant in Bulleh Shah's writings, that it completely overshadows his other divine qualities. Other writers have written volumes on God's omnipotence, His omnipresence, His omniscience and the like but for Bullah His main quality is love. In his words, "love is the essence of God." So intimate is his love for the divine Beloved, that he is not constrained to call Him a "trickster," a "juggler," a "hypocrite," a "thief," and a "thug". There is a playfulness in the ecstasy of his love. In one of his *kafis* he asks his divine Beloved, "Is my love for you only one-sided? Or, do you also have some feeling for me"?¹ It is in such a state of mind that he calls out:

1. To steal the heart of Sassi He assumed the form
of Punnun.
2. Guess who has come in disguise!
How the Trickster has put on a mask!
3. In the fold of my cloak hides the Thief, friends.
To whom shall I complain?
4. To hide and seek and to play tricks—
such is Your greatness, my Love!

It is obvious from the above that love for Bulleh Shah—as indeed in all Sufi poetry—refers to the love of or for God or his Master or Mentor, but it never means love for woman. The Beloved, in his poems, is always the object of spiritual adoration. Generally, the poet appears in the guise of a woman in quest of her Beloved, but this Beloved is either the Lord or the Master. References to Heer and Ranjha—as indeed to other

1. According to one mystic saint "Love is first born in the heart of the Beloved." Bu Ali Qalandar says, "If you were to get an inkling of His love for you, you would know how much stronger it is than your love for Him."

classical lovers—are not to the legendary lovers, but to the devotee and the Master, or to the soul and the Lord. Thus, the apparently straightforward love poems in Bullah are anything but plain. The Lord hidden behind the screen of maya is the fountain head of light for others, but for Bullah He is a Beloved who has covered His beauty behind a veil to agitate His lover. Says he in one of his couplets :

His face is a light, the world is its veil.
He has concealed himself in the veil,
covering His face with its hem.

God is generally depicted as transcendent, but even this attribute of transcendence has been portrayed by Bulleh Shah with such vivacity and pertness, that the faraway Lord seems to abide quite near.

Hail ! the secret of the Beloved is wondrous.
All except the lovers are blind to it.
O Bullah, none can behold the Beloved.
And whoever sees Him is not to be counted.
He has no shape, no form, no color;
He has hidden himself like a thief.

For Bulleh Shah the Lord is like a sportive Beloved, who neither consents nor listens to others. He is seen as a buoyant youth who does what He likes. He throws hints from behind a screen. He pulls strings while keeping himself hidden, and does not come out in the open.

He listens not to my advice, He speaks not a word
to me.

Shall I ask and find out what He intends?

Yesterday I was mad for Him, and He was mad
for me.

Why is He afraid of me now?

From behind the screen He shot at me
an arrow of love, and it pierced my heart.

My life has been caught in a net !

Another instance of His mysterious ways, which makes it impossible for an ordinary human being to comprehend His doings, is given below :

Some are vain and self-conceited, they flourish
in the world, O Friend !

Some, insulted and disgraced, follow You;

You burn the burnt over again, O Friend !

You dance with those who are soiled with mud,
O Friend !

I have adorned myself with pearls of love,

But you flee from me, O Friend !

Never again shall I boast of the beloved Ranjha,
O Friend !

A hint has been given by saints and mystics about the despatch of souls by God from their original abode at the time of creation of the universe. It is said that the souls were not willing to leave God and come to this world. God prevailed upon them to leave, with the promise that He himself would come to take them back with Him. Bulleh Shah has written some beautiful *kafis* on this theme. In his own inimitable style he complains to God—as an irked lover—for having failed to keep His promise in the following *kafi* :

I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

With the souls You made a false promise:

"You go and I shall soon follow you."
 But here You have created a screen.
 And I wander about lost in delusion.
 O Bulleh Shah, there is an infinite abyss;
 Nothing in the two worlds can fathom it.
 There is no knowledge of this bank or that.
 I flounder in it without my head and feet !
 I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

The theory of Creation has been propounded by many a saint and seer. Bulleh Shah, too, describes how the One became many, and unity was transformed into multiplicity. In the beginning the One was absorbed in profound contemplation, and nothing existed besides Him. In his own style and language of love Bullah calls Him "The Beautiful Beloved" and conceives His created universe as a lively market of His beauty. He describes the transition from One to the many, thus :

I have now seen the fair Beloved,
 Whose beauty shines through His creation.
 When the One existed all alone,
 No light of His was ever manifest.
 Nor did God¹ or His prophets exist,
 Nor the Omnipotent or the Dominant.
 I have now seen the fair Beloved.

In the state of absolute unity, He was beyond the distinctions of color, form, space, and time. He was peerless, and there was no second with whom He could be compared. He then transformed himself into the many, according to His own will:

1. He existed in the absolute, and became God when He started the creation.

He was without a peer, without an equal.
 He was without a form, without a second.
 He was without a color, without a fellow.
 But now He has countless manifestations.
 I have now seen the fair Beloved.

The beautiful Beloved, of His own decree, put on various garbs to manifest himself. Sometimes He became Adam, sometimes a prophet and sometimes a Master;

The Dear One comes in different garbs.
 He has given himself the name of Adam.
 From the One He has become Ahmad,
 the Chief of the prophets.
 He said, "Let there be," and "it became."
 Out of no likeness He created likeness.
 He inserted 'm' into Ahad,
 And brought the universe into existence.
 I have now seen the fair Beloved.

In his *kafi* "Stay, O Love!" Bulleh Shah has described the doings of the Beloved in variegated forms and which are full of pantheistic mystic significance. The light in Rama, Krishna, and Jesus was His. The power to bear infinite suffering was put by Him in Zacharias, Sarmad, Shams (of Tabriz), and Shah Sharaf. Again, the One who lit the fire of love in Yusuf and Zulaikha, Laila and Majnun, Sassi and Punnun, Heer and Ranjha, Mirza and Sahiban and other legendary lovers was He. And, He again it was who put ego and pride in Namrud, Pharaoh, Harnakash, Ravan, and the Kaurvas to bring about their destruction. Whatever happens in the world emanates from His colorful sense of drama. In another of His *kafis*, too, he calls the world as His game of love:

Whom do you tell that You are without habitation?
 You abide in every form, in every color.
 You yourself said, "Let there be."
 Who other than You came into being?
 You made everything emanate from love;
 And You abide in everyone as the lover.

The lover of God imbibes true humility in himself, for he has the realization of the greatness of the Lord. This indeed is one of the prominent virtues of saints and mystics. Bulleh Shah, too, is full of humility like a true lover. Says he :

1. I find here imperious people, full of pride;
 I am the only humbled one, full of sins.
2. I am a sweeperess in the service of the true Lord.
 My feet are bare, my hair are shorn;
 And the message has come from there.

He gives the hint that people with good deeds and with the credit of much meditation have been ferried across the ocean of this world, but he himself is without any virtue and is entirely dependent on the mercy of the Lord :

The ones with good deeds have gone across,
 But my honor lies in the hands of the Lord.

It is not justice that he wants, but His grace and mercy. For, his black deeds demand His forgiveness, and not justice which would land him in hell:

1. If you were to dispense justice, there is no place
 for me;
 From Your grace alone could I get a bounty.

2. None other than You is mine. To whom shall I
give a call?

O Bullah, may King Inayat bestow a glance on me
in alms!

The path of the mystics is the path of love. Their love is one-pointed, fixed on their Master or on God. They are so lost in the object of their devotion, that they become oblivious to all else. A true lover of God identifies his own will in the will of God. Whatever comes from Him is cherished. His meditation is not meant to earn a seat in Paradise or to avoid the tortures of Hell. Once Shibli was observed running with a burning coal in his hand. "Where are you going?" people asked. "I am running to set fire to the *Ka'ba*," he answered, "so that men may henceforward care only for the Lord of the *Ka'ba*." On another occasion he was holding in his hand a piece of wood alight at both ends. "What are you going to do?" he was asked. "I am going to set Hell on fire with one end and Paradise with the other," he replied, "so that men may concern themselves only with God."¹

Mystics have conveyed love of the soul for God in two kinds of symbols. The first kind has been taken from nature. Lotus and the sun, lotus and water, sea and the moon, earth and water, sun and the sun-bird, moon and the moon-bird, rain and the rain-bird, moth and candle, flower and bumble-bee, fish and water and the like are examples of the first kind.

The second kind of symbols refers to human relationships. Instances of this kind are: father and son, mother and son, master and servant, husband and wife,

1. Arberry: *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, p. 281.

etc. The most frequently used relationship is of husband and wife. Hidden in this analogy is the difference in the customs and manner that exists between the parents' house and the house of the in-laws for the bride. To be accepted in the house of the in-laws, the bride has to give up the attachment to her parents for that of her husband. She has to completely transform herself. The greater the interest and love she has for her husband, the greater is her detachment from all other bonds. Likewise, the soul, through love for her divine Spouse, gets rid of all her worldly attachments, and consequently is freed from all ailments of the gross world.

It is the experience of the mystic trance in the divine union which gives rise to all great art, literature, religion and philosophy. When, however, the trance is being experienced in all its intensity, there is no room for anything else. Art, religion and the like are only byproducts of that experience, and are born only in retrospect. Prof. Puran Singh says in this context: "There is no religion nor art without His inspiration. It is when inspiration has left us that religion assumes the form of ethics, philanthropy, humanity, churches, mosques and temples, hospitals and orphanages, because inspiration needs no such crutches. . . . It is only the increased sickness of the soul that demands the props of a philosophy to support its semblance of life. Philosophy is merely a weed. We have no need of it when we are alive with the inspiration of love."¹

It is this supremacy of love over all other paths leading to spiritual realization, that Sufi saints and mystics have extricated the plant of spirituality from the mire and slush of asceticism, karma and knowledge, and

1. *The Spirit of Oriental Poetry*, p. 264.

embedded it in the lovely and fragrant valley of love. It is noteworthy that in most of the metaphors, allegories, analogies and parables used by mystics all over the world the general import is of love and its dominance over all else. This is particularly so in the writings of Bulleh Shah. His intoxication with the love of his Master or the Lord is evident in almost every one of his poems.

THE LORD IS ALL-PERVADING

According to Bulleh Shah the Lord is present in everything and everyone. He is the essence behind all appearance. The world is His play. In the multiplicity of His creatures, He had hidden himself in every one of the many. He also exists behind every element and force of nature. There is a strong pantheistic trend in Bulleh Shah's writings. The distinctions between Adam and Eve, man and woman, gods and goddesses, the three attributes and the five elements are all resolved in the reality of the One. He is in disguise behind all His creation. And, whatever exists, emanates from Him. In one of his *kafis*, Bullah asks his Beloved:—

From whom do You conceal yourself?
Wherefore do You peep through the veil?
You yourself, O Lord, did manifest at first,
Now you teach the lesson of offering prayers.
Now you yourself have come to behold,
And, in the guise of Laila You give a glimpse.
Now, You have turned your aim on me!
You cannot remain hidden any more.

You have let yourself be called 'Bullah',
But with the veil of the earthly form in between.

The Lord in disguise dances in all the puppets He has created. His light shines through all men, beasts and birds. He is present in the murderer and the murdered, the master and the servant, the king and the beggar, the libertine and the ascetic. Credit goes to the Master, who imparts the method of realizing unity in the diversity.

He himself is the deer and himself the leopard.
He himself then goes out to hunt.
He himself is the master and himself the slave,
And himself He gets sold for a price.
Sometimes He mounts an elephant;
Sometimes He roams with a begging bowl,
Sometimes as a prince, a yogi or a libertine,
He acts in the play in various guises.
What a game the juggler has played!
He has made me dance as a puppet.
I dance to the tune of that researcher,
Who has made me realize the Beloved.
The Beloved has come as man!

In this context, his *kafis* "Whom do you tell You are without habitation?", "Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!" and "What a carefree game He plays!" seem to have been composed in a state of strange ecstasy. In the first-mentioned poem he writes:

Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?
You abide in every form, in every color.
You yourself hear and You make us listen.
You yourself sing and You yourself play.
With your own hands You play the melodies.

You yourself move the string of "I am the Truth."
 You make Mansur ascend the gallows;
 Then, stand aloof with unconcerned smile.
 Somewhere You are in a Turk, somewhere in an
 Ethiopian;
 Somewhere You are in a hat-wearing Englishman.
 Somewhere You are in a drunkard in a tavern;
 Whom do You tell You are without habitation?

It is said that Sarmad thus addressed his executioner, when he raised his sword to kill him: "I am a sacrifice unto You. Come, come, I recognize You well in whatever form You come!" In a state of extreme ecstasy, the lover of God sees Him in everyone. The well-known mystic Naushah writes: "A dervish is at peace with all. He considers none as his enemy."¹ Scanning through the pages of history one comes across numerous examples of realized souls, who saw the Beloved in all, including their own executioners. From over their eyes the veil of duality had fallen, and they saw the One prevail everywhere. Kabir writes in one of his oft-quoted hymns: "First, God created His light; from it were all creatures born. The whole world emanated from one light. Whom shall we call good, whom bad? Brothers, wander not in delusion: The Creator is in the created, the created in the Creator; He prevails all over. The clay is the same, but moulded in various forms. The potter has himself fashioned them all. Find not fault with the clay vessels nor with the Potter."² The example of the pot and the potter has been also used in a famous verse of Rumi: "He himself is the clay, himself the pot and

1. *A History of Sufism in India*, V.II, p. 440.

2. *Adi Granth*: pp. 1349-50.

himself the potter. And above all, He comes as the customer.”¹ It is said that Namdev was once about to eat his meal, when a dog came and took away a loaf of bread. Namdev ran in pursuit with the butter-bowl in his hand and called out to the dog: “Pray, take the butter, do not eat dry bread.” It must have been in such a sublime state that Namdev composed the following hymn:

The One is manifested as many.
Wherever I see, He pervades everywhere.
Maya tempts all with its alluring forms,
But rare is the dispassionate one who knows:
All is God. All is God. Without God there is none.
The thread is one, its beads are many.
So is the Lord woven into the world.
Waves of water, foam and bubbles are not separate
from the sea . . . Says Namdev.
Reflect on the creation of God in your mind,
and know that the one Lord abides in every heart.²

Guru Nanak conveys the same truth in the hymn starting with the following lines:

He is tasteful, He is the taste and He himself
is the taster.
He is the bride as also the spouse in bed with her.
My Lord is masterful, He it is who pervades all.

Bulleh Shah’s poem starting with the line, “There is only one thread of all cotton,” also reveals the same truth. Just as cotton is woven into a great variety of

1. *The Masnavi*.

2. *Adi Granth*: p. 485.

cloth and even as silver is moulded into numerous kinds of jewelry, so also behind the multiplicity of nature one Reality is working. The same theme is emphatically presented in another *kafi* as follows:

I have seen, verily I have seen;
 The Satguru has shown me the Unseen.
 Somewhere He is hostile, somewhere friendly.
 Somewhere He is Majnun, somewhere Laila.
 Somewhere He is a guru, somewhere a disciple.
 In all He manifests His own path.
 Somewhere He becomes a temple with idols.
 Somewhere He assumes the form of an anchorite.
 Somewhere He comes in the garb of a Sheikhan.¹
 Somewhere He is found on the prayer mat of Muslims.
 Somewhere He is seen reciting Hindu scriptures.
 Somewhere He lets himself be lost in a labyrinth.
 At times He has showered His love in every home.

Elsewhere Bulleh Shah says, "I see no stranger in either of the two worlds," and "The Lord resides in every heart." He makes it clear that the pride born out of caste or creed, country or nation is the product of ignorance. The problems of color, race, profession, man, woman are raised by those who are not aware of the spiritual light present in all creatures. To consider oneself something special because of such considerations is to display lack of understanding. God has created man. It is we who divide ourselves into races, nations, creeds and countries and create a variety of problems. Bulleh Shah goes to the extent of saying that to divide men into believers and heretics is itself the greatest act of heresy. What can be a greater blasphemy than a belief in

1. The wife of a Sheikh.

duality? Soul is the essence of God, and love of God is the true creed, true religion of the soul :

1. Such knowledge has been ignited within me;
That I have ceased to be a Hindu or a Muslim.
All that is acceptable to me is love.
It is the lover alone who realizes the Lord.
2. I am neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim.
I take to the path of amity for all.
3. I do not see the believers and the unbelievers,
after having entered the state of unity.

Guru Arjun conveys this thought in almost the same language :

Neither am I a Hindu, nor am I a Muslim.
My body and soul belong to Allah and Ram.

Adi Granth, M.5., p. 1136

That love is the essence of God, the Master and the soul, is thus expressed by Soami Ji :

Love is the form of the soul as well as the Lord.
Know ye that both God and love are one.
And so also is the Master the incarnation of love.

Sar Bachan, p. 103

In the same strain Hafiz says in one of his lyrics: "Do not ever say that *Ka'ba* is better than the idol-temple. Whichever gives a glimpse of the Beloved is more pleasing. Behind the curtain of the mosque and the temple is manifest the same Beloved. If two stones are of different colors, are the colors of the sparks produced by them also different? The mosque and the temple are

resplendent by the same light. I am amazed at the quarrel between faith and unbelief." He goes on to add, "From the day I have seen conflict between creeds, I have given up all concern either with the Sheikh or with the Brahmin."

Sages and saints have taught brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God. Without the foundation of the latter the mansion of the former could never stand. Guru Arjun says, "There is but one Father, and we are all His children."¹ Likewise, says Guru Amardas, "All living creatures are His, and He belongs to all. Whom shall we call bad, when there is none other?"² In the *Bible* we find the same teaching in the commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." On these two commandments,³ hang all the law and the prophets.

In his own matchless style Bulleh Shah conveys the same truth in these words:

Somewhere He is Ramdas, somewhere Fateh
 Mohammed,
 There is the same ancient uproar!
 The Muslims are averse to being cremated;
 And the Hindus are loath to be buried.
 Both die quarreling over this wrangle.
 Such is the cause of enmity between them!
 Their quarrel came to an end,
 When someone else made His appearance.

1. *Adi Granth*: p. 611

2. *Adi Granth*: p. 425

3. Matthew: 22: 37-40

SEARCH FOR GOD

He is within

God is not to be found anywhere outside, neither in the mosque nor in the temple, neither in holy places of pilgrimage nor in holy rivers or mountains. He abides within man himself, and there alone He can be realized.

In terms of his most frequently employed symbols, Bulleh Shah says:

Deluded Heer seeks Him in woods,
While Beloved Ranjha plays in her veil.
I completely lost my senses before Him.
Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love!

Many other *kafis* have been written by Bulleh Shah in the same strain. Those starting with the lines "In the fold of my cloak hides the beloved Thief, friends" and "Words that come to my tongue cannot be held back" are two outstanding examples on this theme. They stress the point that something lost in the house can be found only in that house, and not somewhere outside. All attempts to search for it outside are bound to fail, and will entail the loss of much time and energy. True lovers of God do not roam about in forests and jungles in quest of Him, but seek Him within themselves.

Whosoever found the secret from the mystic,
He searched for the path within himself.
He is a blissful dweller of that temple,
Which knows neither rise nor fall.
One essential truth is worthy of all respect,
And I know this truth to abide in everyone.
In everyone dwells the form of the Lord.

In some it is manifest, in some it is latent.
 Here in this world darkness prevails.
 And, this world is a slippery courtyard.
 Enter within yourself and see who is there.
 In vain do the crazy seek Him outside.

He goes on to say:

O Bullah, the Lord is not separate from us.
 Other than the Lord none does exist.
 But, alas! we do not have the seeing eye.
 That's why life is a tale of suffering.
 Words that come to my tongue cannot be held back.

Bulleh Shah has often described the body as a house or a courtyard. In the following lines of a *kafi* he says that the Beloved resides within the house, but it is difficult to catch Him:

He came to abide in my house;
 He came to delude me with His guiles.
 Ask Him if it was magic or a dream.
 Get all the truth revealed by Him.
 He dwells within my heart;
 He sits and laughs with me.
 If I make a query, He gets up and flees;
 And, He takes to flight as does a hawk.

Body as Temple of God

Since God resides within man, Bulleh Shah has called the human body as the Temple of God. And, God himself has created this temple. The initial lesson for a true seeker of God is to know this truth. All external temples are false temples. The music played in them, such as of the bell and the conch is a poor imitation of

the divine melody reverberating in the true temple of the human body. The divine melody never ceases to ring, the music of the external temple rings only for some time. In the temples outside, light is produced from the oil poured into clay lamps, which goes out when the oil is finished or when the wick is burnt out. In the inner temple the immortal flame of divine light is ever glowing. The inner music and the inner light have no beginning, no end, no decline:

When I learnt the lesson of love,
 My heart dreaded the sight of a mosque.
 I then entered the abode of the Lord,
 Where resound a thousand flutes.
 I was sick of reading *Vedas* and *Qura'ns*;
 My forehead was bruised by prostrations.
 God is not at Hindu shrines nor at Muslims' Mecca.
 Whosoever found, found Him in light divine.
 Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love!

The *Bible* reveals the same truth thus: "Kingdom of God is within you."¹ Again, "Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is He worshiped with men's hands."² Guru Nanak conveys it in almost identical words: "That alone is the temple of God wherein He is revealed. And, it is in the human body where He is found through the Guru's Word. Seek Him not without, for the Creator is within the house. The worldling know not the essence of God's temple and so waste their lives. The One pervades all, but is known through the Guru's Word."³

1. Luke 17 : 21

2. Acts 17 : 24, 25.

3. *Adi Granth* : p. 953.

Human body is Mecca and Ka'ba

Bulleh Shah calls the human body as the true Mecca and the forehead as its arch. He feels sorry for the people who go on a pilgrimage to the external Mecca. They do not know that the true Mecca is the body wherein the effulgence of God can be experienced. Says he:

The hajjis go to Mecca, my house is my Mecca with
my Bridegroom.

Whichever side the Beloved is, that way the *Ka'ba* is,
Even if you were to read all the four books.

In another *kafi* he says that through the waves of love aroused in the heart can God be found:

The seven seas sleep within my heart;
I shall stir them into a storm.
Charms and spells I shall work;
And win over my offended Friend.

Bulleh Shah has given the name "Lanka" to the body in one of his poems. Ravan, the villain of the epic, *Ramayan* the demon with ten heads—signifies the ten senses which have to be tamed to realize God. The true pool of nectar, bathing in which the soul becomes purified, is within the human body.

Reverse the direction of the flow of Ganga,
O Sadhu, for then you will behold the Lord.
If Kumbh Karan¹ were to retrace his steps,
he would find the secret of Lanka.

1. A character in the epic *Ramayan*, who used to sleep for six months at a stretch. Here, it signifies the long period of inactivity of man in doing his meditation.

Kill the ten-headed monster,¹ and save the life of
 Lakshman, for then the unstruck melody will ring.
 Your Master will grant you such a region of nectar,
 that it will take you to complete absorption
 in God.

In a beautiful analogy Bulleh Shah denounces external search for God by going to temples, mosques and other places of pilgrimage. Those who look for Him within themselves are blessed with the ecstasy of divine union:

Beloved, no longer does noise appear sweet;
 Now I am happy within myself.
 A new flower has blossomed in my house;
 I have experienced new thrills and delights.
 O mother, I am dying of ecstasy and joy.

The Veil

The soul, as bride, is pining in separation from her Bridegroom, the Lord. The two are not distant from each other, but there is a curtain or a veil between them, which does not let them unite. This veil is of the ego, which gives a false sense of independence to the soul. The soul is incomplete without the Lord. It is also the ego, which produces ignorance and delusion. So, unless the veil of ego and ignorance is removed, the soul can never be in peace. Bulleh Shah says in a *kafi*:

1. You abide near, but You reveal not your abode,
 Where shall I go to seek You?
 Dwelling in the same house together,
 Before whom shall I scream?

1. Ravan, the ten-headed villain of *Ramayan*. Here, he stands for the ten senses, which have to be tamed for realizing God.

2. Out of neglect you did not repeat His Name.
In your negligence the Beloved kept hidden.
That Supreme Being abides within you,
But you are wont to relish carnal desires.

Guru Arjun conveys the same idea in these words:

They live together in the same house,
but they talk not to each other.
For the Invisible cannot be known,
when the veil of ego intervenes.¹

Bulleh Shah counsels man to rise above his ego and ignorance to attain union with the Lord. No amount of external piety in the form of rituals and pilgrimages can yield the desired fruit :

By going to Mecca the mystery is not solved,
So long as the ego is not annihilated.
By going to Ganga the mystery is not solved,
Though you may take a hundred dips into it.
By going to *Gaya*² the mystery is not solved,
Though you may offer many rice-cakes³ at funerals.
O Bullah, the mystery will be solved only,
When the "I" (the ego) is completely eliminated.

So long as the senses are not tamed, the false husband, (the mind) is not killed and the heresy of duality is not removed, union with the Lord is not possible:

[Expressions, such as killing, vanquishing, subduing, eliminating and annihilating the mind, mean controlling the mind. This is

1. *Adi Granth* : p. 205.

2. A place of Hindu pilgrimage.

3. A ball of rice is offered at the funeral rites (shradhas) to the deceased's relatives, according to Hindu custom.

achieved by removing the various coverings that bind the soul, and thus liberating it from the slavery of the mind.]

O Bullah, I have been married to the yogi;
 Ignorant people have no knowledge of it.
 I am his property, having tamed the five *pirs*¹
 I have sacrificed unbelief from my heart with my head
 on my palm.
 Fortunately I have killed my false husband (mind),²
 administering poison (nectar)³ to him.

The Tenth Door

Where shall we look for the Lord within the temple of our body? In the manner of other seers and saints, Bulleh Shah also states that in the house or courtyard of the body there are nine doors or outlets. They are: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth and the two lower orifices. It is through these apertures that connection of the soul with the outer world is established. But, there is a tenth door which opens into the inner spiritual world. This tenth door⁴ is, in fact, the

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1. The five *pirs* are generally believed to be : Ghazi Mian Salar Mas'ud, Zinda Ghazi, Sheikh Farid, Khwaja Khizar and Pir Badar. From the spiritual point of view, Waris Shah has called the five exteroceptors (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) as the five *pirs*. In Sufi thought, it would not be far-fetched to call controlling the five senses as "taming of the five *pirs*."
 2. Mind, the agent of the Negative Power, which holds the soul under its sway.
 3. The Nectar of the Name of God, which redeems the soul, proves fatal for the evil tendencies of the mind.
 4. It is at the tenth door where the soul is knotted together with the mind, and wherever the attention of the mind goes, there the soul has, perforce, to go also. And the mind, in turn, is lured by the senses and drags the soul along with it. But when the attention of the mind goes from the tenth door upward, it is no longer a slave of the senses and can travel towards its own home along with the soul. Then the soul is free to go on to the Father's House, it's own source. Thus the mind is happy in its home, and the soul enjoys everlasting bliss with the Father.

seat of the mind and soul in waking consciousness. Descending from this point she passes through the nine doors and gets in touch with the world outside. In the process she is enslaved by the pleasures of the senses. She is ignorant of the bliss of the spiritual world and of union with the Lord. Bulleh Shah stresses that so long as the soul is ignorant of the tenth door or the tenth lane from where the path to the Lord's mansion commences, she can never get united with Him:

This courtyard has nine doors, and the tenth
has been kept hidden.

I do not know the value of the lane, which leads to
the Lord's abode.

Kabir conveys the same truth in these words: "The woman (soul) who is deluded in the nine doors, does not obtain the incomparable treasure. Says Kabir, 'All the nine doors are cheats, the essence lies in the tenth'."¹

The human soul is lying cramped in the prisonhouse of the body, with its nine doors. Not till it gets released from it through the hidden tenth door into the spiritual world within, can it get freedom and enjoy peace. Says Soami Ji:

You are imprisoned in the nine doors,
And not for a moment do you enjoy peace.
Open ye the tenth door, and revel in bliss.

Sar Bachan, p. 145

The Persian mystic Shams of Tabriz says: "Look not downwards to the earth like beasts. You are, after all, a

1. *Adi Granth* : p. 339

man; look upwards. When you recover from the swoon of this body, becoming a new being, you will attain a new world."

Khwaja Hafiz says it thus: "You who never come out of the house of your body, how can you ever enter the lane of Reality?" And, Rumi expresses it in these words: "So long as man does not rise above the senses, he remains deprived of a vision of the hidden face."

The tenth door behind the two eyes has been called by various names, such as door of the house and door of salvation. Bulleh Shah calls it the niche having a window which opens out into the palace of the Beloved, in the following *kafi*:

Play thou in the courtyard with joy!
In this courtyard is a delightful niche,
in the niche is a window.
I spread my bed in the window and
revel in play with my Beloved.

Hundreds of years earlier, Saint Beniji had proclaimed that by opening the inner window, man is awakened forever, and becomes the beholder of the three worlds: "At the top is the head, in the head is a niche, within the niche is a window. The one who attains to this window is forever awake, he never sleeps, and beholds the three worlds."¹

The eye that sees the Lord

Other names given to the hidden door by saints and mystics are: the eye, the inner eye, the third eye, the divine eye and Shiva's eye. In Arabic and Persian

1. *Adi Granth* : p. 974

languages mystics have called it “the hidden eye” or “the black spot”. In the *Bible* it has been referred to as “the single eye.”¹ Bulleh Shah says that vision of God is impossible so long as the inner eye remains closed.

O Bullah, the Lord is not separate from us.
But, alas! we do not have the seeing eye.
That's why life is a tale of suffering.

Indeed, without opening the inner eye man is no better than a beggar. Though his house is filled with spiritual wealth, he acts like a pauper. His condition is that of the one who sits on a seashore, but suffers from thirst:

Pearls, jewels and the philosopher's stone
are all near you.
Near you is the ocean, and you are dying of thirst.
Open your eye, and sit up, O you beggar.
Wake up at least now, O you dear traveler!

In another *kafi* Bulleh Shah has called it a hole in the head, through which reverberates divine melody:

The unstruck music is all-uniting, foe to none,
and it emanates from the orifice of the head.

In one of his famous odes, Tulsi Sahib, the great Saint of Hathras, has given a detailed account of the music emanating from the eye center as also the method of listening to it, to a Muslim divine, Sheikh Taqi:

1. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” Matthew 6: 22.

Listen, O Taqi, seek not thy Beloved in the world
 outside;
 Within thine own self, behold His splendor.
 In the pupil of thine eye is a mole, wherein is hidden
 the entire mystery.
 Peep within and behold thou what lies beyond
 this dark curtain.
 The secret of the fourteen realms will, for certain,
 be revealed to thee.
 Let thy attention not slip, see that thou art ever
 vigilant.
 Listen! Thou art constantly being called
 from the Most High.
 The voice of thy Beloved ever beckons thee to Him.
 It is not meeting with the Beloved that is difficult.
 What is difficult, O Taqi, is that it is hard to behold
 Him.
 Without the grace of some realized Master, says
 Tulsi,
 The goal of salvation is distant, beyond thy reach.

In the following line from one of his hymns, Soami Ji
 gives a hint of the bliss that emanates from opening the
 third eye:

Abandoning the two eyes I reached the third;
 And perceived the resplendence of the pure Lord.

Sar Bachan, p. 252

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Concentration and Contemplation

How is the soul, imprisoned in the nine doors, to be
 liberated into the tenth, and how is it to open the inner
 eye? Saints and mystics tell us that man has the habit of

thinking, concentrating or remembering the qualities of something or some one. Now, whatever he thinks on, also produces its image or its picture in his mind. This habit of dwelling on something has been called by the mystics *simran*,¹ and the habit of forming pictures *dhyān* or contemplation. Even when we are sitting in a dark chamber, our mind is never static. It is engaged in thinking about something or contemplating on some form. This, in turn, produces attachment with those objects. Now, the objects of this world being transitory in nature entail suffering, because separation from them is painful. If our attachments are to avoid suffering, they must be fixed on something permanent and not perishable. The only permanent being is God, who is neither born, nor does He die, nor indeed He knows any decline. So, unless our attachments shift from the external objects to the Lord within, deliverance from suffering is impossible.

How can love for God be born within us, when He is formless? He cannot be seen with our eyes, nor heard with our ears, nor felt by any other sense-organ. Indeed, He is beyond the scope of any sense-knowledge. Now saints and mystics tell us that the answer to this problem is the Master. The Master is the concrete form of the Lord, because he has realized God and has merged with Him. That is why saints tell us that the only entity worthy of our contemplation is the Master. Says Soami Ji:

Contemplate on the form of the Master in your eyes.
And connecting your soul with the Word,
rise to spiritual realms within.

Sar Bachan, p. 8

1. Repetition of the Holy Names, which lead to concentration.

It is due to attachment with worldly objects, that mind first descends from the eye center to the nine sense-outlets, and then spreads in the whole wide world. If we reverse the process by fixing our attention on the eye center and concentrate on the Lord's Name as also contemplate on the Master's form, our mind and soul will begin to contract and vacate the nine doors to collect at the tenth. When the soul and mind are completely collected in the center behind the two eyes, the tenth door is automatically opened. It was this process, which was described by Jesus Christ in these words:

Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.¹

Bulleh Shah addresses the Lord in a *kafi* as follows:

For your sake I have become thus:
I have closed my nine doors to sleep;
And I have come to stand at the tenth.
O, accept my love for You now!

Bulleh Shah has used the word "sleep" in the above stanza. It does not mean the ordinary phenomenon of periodically recurring physiological state of rest. It signifies rendering insensible the part of the body lower than the two eyes, by vacating the nine doors of the soul and mind. Such a soul becomes oblivious of the outer world, but it gets awakened to the inner one. Bulleh Shah means to say that people, awake to the world outside, are in reality drowned in deep sleep. On the

1. Matthew 7:7

contrary, those persons are really awake, who through spiritual practice have raised and collected their soul at the eye center. Those who are asleep from inside, wake up at the time of death and are repentant for wasting their invaluable life on useless activities:

I am awake while the whole world is asleep.
It will shed tears when its eyes will open.

There is the veil of ego with all its dirt that lies between the soul and the Lord. Unless this dirt is removed and the soul is cleansed, she cannot behold the Lord. This task of purification can be performed by concentration and contemplation. Taking himself to be sweeperess Bullah says:

I am a sweeperess in the service of the true Lord.
With the *chhajli*¹ of contemplation and the broom
of knowledge,
I sweep of the chaff of lust and anger.

Other saints have also laid stress on the practice of concentration and contemplation. They too consider it indispensable for God-realization. Says Guru Arjun in this context: "Standing or sitting, asleep or awake, *yea*, with every breath, contemplate on the Lord."² Again, "Forget Him not for a moment, night or day, any hour, any instant."³ And in the words of Sultan Bahu: "Never be remiss in remembering the Lord, although it is sharper than the sword . . . He alone is grateful who

1. A winnowing implement for separating grain from chaff.

2. *Adi Granth* : p. 1298.

3. *Adi Granth* : p. 247.

remembers Him, and forgets Him not for a moment, O Bahu." Also, "The moment He is out of your mind is the moment of ingratitude. Thus has my *Murshid* taught me."

In his *Kafi*, "Reverse the direction of the flow of Ganga, O Sadhu," Bulleh Shah describes in detail the part played by concentration and contemplation in spiritual practice and in attaining the experience through it. He says that in order to realize God, one has to make the Ganga flow in the reverse direction. In other words, the soul current has to be withdrawn from the lower extremities, through the main body, to the center behind the two eyes. He has used the symbols of the spindle and the spinning wheel for concentration and contemplation. Also, he has called the process as "flowing in the reverse direction," because the soul and the mind have to be brought in from outside and are to be raised upwards from below. To rise above the ten senses and their temptations have been called by him "killing the ten-headed monster." When this has been achieved, the secrets of the body, which he calls "Lanka," are revealed, and the unstruck, divine melody begins to reverberate. Eventually, union with the Lord is attained. But, this consummation is possible only through the instrument of the Guru or the Master. Bulleh Shah conveys all this in the following words of the *kafi*:

Reverse the direction of the flow of Ganga,
 O Sadhu, for then you will behold the Lord.
 Take the cotton roll of love in your hand,
 and let not any knot be formed in it.
 The spindle of knowledge and the wheel of
 contemplation are to move backwards.

If Kumbh Karan¹ were to retrace his steps,
 he would find the secret of Lanka.
 Kill the ten-headed monster² and save the life of
 Lakshman, for then the unstruck melody will ring.
 This blessed state you will attain through
 the grace of your master,
 And then alone you will deserve to be called his
 disciple.
 He will grant you such a region of nectar,³
 that it will take you to complete absorption
 in Him.

The Royal Vein

After passing through the third eye, the soul enters a fine vein, which has been called *Sushmana* or *Sukhmana* by saints and mystics in Hindi and Punjabi. Bulleh Shah and many other Sufi saints have given it the name *Shah Rag* (The Royal Vein). It should not be confused with the main blood vessel, aorta. In mystic terminology it is a fine path for the soul to travel on its spiritual journey from the eye center, upwards. Bulleh Shah says that those who are able to reach and enter the Royal Vein do not find their destination, the court of the Lord, very far.

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1. Kumbh Karan, a character in the epic *Ramayan*, who used to sleep for six months at a stretch. Here, it signifies the long inactivity of man in doing his meditation.
 2. Ravan, the ten-headed villain, in *Ramayan*. Here he stands for the ten-senses, which have to be tamed to realize God.
 3. Muslim mystics have called it 'Hauz-i-Kausar' (the Tank of Paradise) and 'Chashma-i-Abihayat' (the Fountain of Ambrosia). Other saints and mystics have given it various other names, such as Amritsar (the Pool of Nectar) and Mansarover (the Lake of Honor). The mystics say that by bathing in this pool, the soul is rid of all coverings and impurities, and man truly comes to know himself. This self-realization is a necessary pre-condition for God-realization.

Through the Royal Vein God is not far.
People have for nothing raised a turmoil.

In confirmation of this point, Bulleh Shah has quoted verses from the *Qura'n* in many of his poems. In these verses God says to man:

1. You have written, "From the Royal Vein I am near you."
You have given the lesson, "I am with you."
You have ordained, "Know me within yourself."
Then, why have You put on this veil?
2. You played the tune on the flute: "From the Royal Vein, I am near you."
"Know me within yourself." You made us hear this cry.

Sultan Bahu conveys the same truth in his own words thus: "Those who understood the essence of God correctly, they moved towards progress. O Bahu know that 'From the Royal Vein I am near you,' and end all disputes."

In some other poems Bulleh Shah says that through spiritual practice the soul can travel in the fourteen worlds, and man's crow-like attitude (of carnal desires) would change into the swan-like attitude (of drinking the nectar of the Lord's Name):

1. I walk freely in the fourteen worlds,
I am not constrained anywhere.
2. The Beloved himself displays His beauty,
And makes the drinkers intoxicated!
Seeing the graceful pace of swans,
Bullah has forgotten the gait of crows.

3. In the rapture of Your love I have lost my senses;
I have now found how close You and I are.
You, O Lord, are near the Royal Vein within me.

Tulsi Sahib of Hathras, revealing the same secret to Sheikh Taqi, a Muslim divine, says in one of his famous ghazals:

Why do you wander in quest of the Beloved?
The path to the Beloved lies through the Royal Vein.

The State of Trance

As the soul is completely withdrawn from the body and concentrated within, it is said to be in the state of *samadhi*. It is in a trance, and although the body has become senseless, the soul has been awakened from deep sleep. This process has also been described by mystics as one of untying a knot because the soul has been separated from the body and the mind. In fact, it is at this stage that man is able to know his reality as soul. When Socrates said, "Know thyself" it is in this profound sense that he had appealed to his compatriots. And, it is in this sense alone that knowledge of the self leads to knowledge of God. For soul and God are identical in essence. So long as the soul is wrapped in coverings, it cannot know its true nature or essence. Bulleh Shah has made abundant use of verses from the *Qura'n* to expound this truth. As already mentioned, he has quoted God saying to man :

Know me through knowing yourself.
O Bullah, when I have known my own self,
I shall no longer bend my sleeping organs.

Bulleh Shah has also called this process the practice of closing one's eyes, ears and mouth to the outside world. He considers the world known through sense organs below the third eye as the world of falsehood. He appeals to man to lift his attention from the world of falsehood and delusion to the everlasting world of the Beloved within:

Leave this abode of falsehood and delusion.
 Establish yourself in the ecstasy of love.
 You will then reach the presence of the Beloved,
 Where your eyes, ears and mouth are closed.

Other saints and mystics have also dwelt upon the subject of self-realization and its relation to God-realization in the same way as that of Bullah. Guru Amar Das says in one of his hymns: "He alone is pure who has known his self. The Lord of bliss himself comes to meet him."¹ The spiritual meaning of the quotation is to separate the soul from the mind and the senses. As long as it is not separated, it can neither know itself nor can it merge in the subtle essence of the Lord. Jesus Christ had also hinted at the same truth: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit."² He too meant to say that the spiritual element can blend with the Lord only after it has been sifted from the coarse material stuff.

Lovers of God often appear as cranks or crazy. They are, however, wise from within. In fact, they are indifferent to the world outside and their attention is

1. *Adi Granth*: p. 1046

2. John 3:6

fixed on the inner resplendence of the Lord. In one of his *kafis* Bullah says :

Your separation has made me crazy and earned me
the name "the mad one."

I shut my eyes, ears and mouth, and bide my time.

Throw now a generous glance on me and be merciful.

Dying While Living

The process of withdrawal of the soul current from the lower part of the body to the eye center has also been called by saints and mystics, 'dying while living.' This is so, because the process of vacating the body of all consciousness is akin to the process of dying. In natural death, the soul vacates the body starting from the lower extremities, and gradually moves upwards. As the process of withdrawal proceeds, the parts vacated become senseless. And when the body has been entirely vacated, we say that the person has died. Now, the same process is gone through in "dying while living," but with two significant differences. In spiritual practice the process is voluntary, unlike the natural death, which is involuntary. In "dying while living" death is induced by the practitioner's own will. He can bring back the soul within the body when he likes, as he can withdraw it at his will. Secondly, the process of involuntary death is extremely painful, but the voluntary death of the spiritual practitioner is as blissful as the other is painful. Says Bullah in a *kafi*:

People in whose bones love makes its abode,

They verily die while they are still living.

Ecstasy seeps into every pore of their body,

And nothing remains hidden from their eyes.

Again, in a couplet he writes :

O Bullah, in Islam I ever find
 special comfort in hijrat :¹
 I die daily and I daily come to life.
 I am daily in transit.

There are numerous examples from other mystics which convey the same truth. St. Paul says in the *Bible*, "I die daily."² Also, in the Gospel according to St. John it is written, "I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."³ To rise above the physical body and to enter the spiritual realms within, is what is implied by the expression 'to be born again'. Since this is possible only through spiritual practice and consequent spiritual growth, after being initiated by a Master, the real birth occurs only when one is connected with the Word by the Master at the time of initiation. In this sense, 'being born again' also refers to the day of initiation by a Master. Kabir says in one of his poems that those who have mastered the practice of dying while living become free from the delusion of this world, and are liberated forever from the bondage of transmigration. "He dies while living and comes back to life again, thus merging into the *Void*."⁴ Living in the sense-world, he rises above it, and is thrown not in the turbulent ocean

1. Muslims have given the name *hijrat* to the departure of prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina. The Muslim calendar commences from this date. Bulleh Shah, in his Sufi style, considers the withdrawal of the soul from the nine sense outlets to the tenth hidden door as *hijrat*. And, rising from the realm of duality to enter the unity of God is called by him, 'entering Islam'.

2. I Corinthians 15:31

3. John 3:3

4. 'Void' here means the pre-creation stage.

of existence.”¹ In the Dialogue, “Phaedo,” Socrates has defined a philosopher as one who pursues the art of dying while living: “For as many as rightly apply themselves to Philosophy aim at nothing else than to die.”² Continuing, to clarify what he means— withdrawing the soul from the body—he remarks that ordinary people do not understand the true import of his statement: “They are ignorant of the sense in which true philosophers desire to die.”³ The House of Guru Nanak in the *Adi Granth* imparts identical teaching: “Where one has to go after death, attain that state while still living.”⁴ “If one dies while living, and from death comes back to life, he attains to salvation indeed.”⁵ The process of withdrawing the soul current from the rest of the body to the eye center does not only result in an extremely blissful experience, but also in emancipation from delusion, from duality. Soami Ji says :

Abide thou in the eyes after collecting
yourself as a unity.

Duality will vanish here when you fix
your gaze on the Light.

Sar Bachan p. 152

Some Persian mystics have dwelt on this theme in even greater detail. Says Shams-i-Tabriz: “The lovers die of their own free will. And this death, before their Beloved, is like sugar to them. Their Master opens their

1. *Adi Granth*: p. 332

2. *Five Dialogues of Plato*, Everyman's Library, edited by Ernest Rhys: pp. 131 and 132.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Adi Granth*: M.1., p. 25.

5. *Adi Granth*: M.3., p. 550.

hidden eye, whereas all the rest die as stark-blind. The mystics go to the Beloved with great delight; the ignorant depart in darkness and in disgrace. And, those in-looking lovers who waste not their nights in slumber, die without fear and without separation. In great joy and ecstasy they depart from this world to be in His presence.” And, Rumi has this to say on such a death: “Die, O friend, before your death, if you seek life everlasting. Yea, die before dying, O , you of good sense, and give your life to the Beloved. It is not a death, which takes you into the grave; indeed it is the death which takes you to light from darkness. It is not a death, which takes you into the grave, it is a change which takes you to a banquet. You are one who has a body without a body. Be not afraid, therefore, of coming out of your body and departing from this life.” Saint Paltu, the well-known north Indian mystic says in this context: “All people die, but rare is the one who knows how to do it. O Paltu, the one who dies while living, dies in bliss, of his own free will.”¹ “While still living, he dies, but comes back to life again. Whosoever can do this, gets released from the bonds of transmigration.”²

Quoting from the *Qura'n*, Bulleh Shah brings out the true import of the holy verse:

“Die thou before thy death,” says the *Qura'n*;
 Bring me back to life from death, O Friend.
 O Bullah, the Lord has come to my house,
 Entertain Him with a sequence of dances, O friend.

1. *Saint Paltu*: Part 3, Sakhi 99.

2. *Saint Paltu*: Part 1, Kundali 72

In another *kafi* he says :

I give you sound advice, if only you were
to set your heart on it.

The dead will rise on the day of resurrection,¹
but the lover will never die.

If you die before your death, such a death will
indeed be priceless.

Light and Sound

What does a man experience on attaining the state of *samadhi*? What happens when he completely withdraws his soul current from the nine sense organs and opens the "tenth door"? As mentioned earlier, such a man experiences death while still living. He leaves the abode of the dead behind and enters the realm of the truly alive. Bulleh Shah says that the one who enters the bright eye center behind the two dark eyes experiences three things : he hears the divine melody, he sees the divine light, and he has the vision of the astral form of his Master :

Your face is reminiscent of Yusuf,
take care of the thunder of clouds, O friend.
From the center within the black tresses,
show me the flash of Your light, O friend.
Whatever color is given, I am dyed in a deep hue,
it has the glow of my Master, O friend !

The experience of these three elements within has also been described by him in a different way :

From the resplendent heaven came out a call,
And it was heard at the court of Lahore.

1. Those devoid of love are the same as dead.

King Inayat fastened a hook as a trap :
And he himself pulls the strings to catch me !

Many saints and mystics have given hints in their writings that by entering the tenth door the soul hears celestial music and sees divine light. For example, Hafiz, the great poet and mystic of Persia, counsels man to raise his attention from the six lower centers and the seven skies to be able to hear the five divine melodies ringing within him : "Be silent and listen thou to the five melodies emanating from above the skies. For, they emerge from beyond the seven and the six." Shams-i-Tabriz conveys the same in these words : "Above the seven skies you will hear the five melodies, when you will unpeg your tent from all the six sides." To make it absolutely clear that the melody comes from within, and is not to be found anywhere outside, he writes, "Reason says : six directions there are and there is no way other than these. Love says : there is a way, and I have traveled on it many a time."

Here are some other statements by Indian mystics : "I have closed the (nine) doors ; now rings the unstruck melody."¹ "There are nine doors, but only the tenth leads to salvation. In it you hear the unstruck melody."² Guru Nanak, in one of his hymns, brings out the fact of light and sound together in the inner experience, and of arousing imperishable love for the Lord : "There is light within, and from within the light emanates sound. Together they put me in rapture of the True. Lord."³

Saint Paltu in one of his *kundalis* gives a detailed account of light and sound experienced within :

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1. *Adi Granth*: Kabir, p. 656
 2. *Adi Granth*: M.3.p. 110
 3. *Adi Granth*: p. 634.

An inverted well is there within,
 wherein burns a lamp ;
 Wherein burns a lamp without a wick,
 without any oil.
 Day and night it burns, through the six seasons
 and the twelve months.
 To one who has found a Master, it comes
 within his sight.
 By the one without a Master, this flame
 cannot be seen.
 From within the flame of the lamp
 emanates a sound.
 Only the one in *Gyan Samadhi*¹ hears it,
 it is heard by none else.
 O Paltu, whosoever hears it, is the one
 with perfect fate :
 An inverted well is there within,
 wherein burns a lamp.

Annihilation and Permanence

Sufi saints have often used the expressions *fana-fil-Sheikh* and *fana-fil-Allah*. Literally the word *fana* means annihilation or passing away. In the present context we can understand by it "merging into". Thus the term *fana-fil-Sheikh* would mean merging into the Master and '*fana-fil-Allah*' will connote "merging into God." Identical ideas are found in the *Adi Granth*:

1. If one merges into the true Master,
 the unutterable Word is realised.

M.I., p. 62

1. Mystic trance.

2. Nanak loses his self and merges into the Master.

M.3.,p. 509

These expressions are not used metaphorically or as ideals, but have a special mystic significance. They indicate a certain spiritual state in mystic trance. Much of Bulleh Shah's poetry points to such a state. For instance, his *kafi* beginning with the line, "Repeating the name of Ranjha I have become Ranjha myself," is symptomatic of this condition. Through concentration and contemplation when the soul leaves the senses, body and mind, it first merges into the form of the Master, and then into that of the Lord. Every true practitioner of the spiritual path aims at attaining such a stage. In his *kafi*, beginning with the line, "O friends, it is now that I learn how love and law are related," Bulleh Shah says :

Within us abides our *Murshid*.
When I fell in love, I learnt this.

Likewise, in his *kafi* "Will You ever call me Your own?" he points out in the last stanza that so long as the disciple does not merge into his Master, he cannot have the vision of God :

O Bullah, when you go to see the Lord,
You have to transform these eyes of yours.
Then alone will you be able to behold Him,
When you come back home as King Inayat.

In the same *kafi* he points out in an earlier stanza, that with the elimination of the ego from within, God alone remains behind, although in the process one might have to go through experience akin to that of Mansur :

If I, the perishable, eliminate my ego from within,
 I shall manifest You who are everlasting.
 If I were to reveal You in the manner of Mansur,
 I would be caught and put on the gallows.
 Will You ever call me your own?

In his *kafi* "O friends, I am lost to myself," Bulleh Shah hints that with the disappearance of the self or the ego from within, the individual merges into the Universal and becomes one with Him:

O friends, I am lost to myself,
 Unveiling my face I dance in the open.
 Wherever I look, Him alone I see.
 By Him I swear, none else exists.
 "He is with you" went round the world,
 When the Master read from the scroll.
 O friends, no name or trace of mine is left!
 Whatever I say, you keep silent about it.
 Do not give a hint of it to any one,
 That Bullah has fully realized Reality.

The same thought is found in the *Bible*, when Jesus Christ says:

I will come again and receive you unto myself;
 That where I am, there ye may be also.¹

KALMA OR THE WORD

As stated earlier, the soul, after vacating the body comes in contact with the Word at the eye center. The Word manifests itself in the form of unstruck melody, which wraps the soul within it, and proceeds on its

1. John 14:3

spiritual journey through various stages to the abode of the Supreme Lord.

Sufi saints and mystics have given various names to the unstruck melody: They have called it *Kalma* (The Word), *Kun* (Decree or Command), *Bang-i-Asmani* (the Celestial Sound), *Nida-i-Sultani* (the Royal Call), *Bang* (the Voice), *Saut* (the Call), *Ism-i-Azam* (the Great Name), *Kalam-i-Ilahi* (the Word of God), *Sultan-ul-Azkar* (the King of Remembrances), etc. Bulleh Shah, denouncing worldly knowledge and praising the *Kalma*, writes in a *kafi*:

We are powerless in the fortress of learning;
This learning has made us prisoners of the pen.
We are all worthless without the Word,
And without the Word we cannot cross.

Two kinds of Kalma

Kalma is of two kinds, *Sifati* (attributive) and *Zati* (Essential or Substantive). All the names given to God, which are based on attributes or qualities, are attributive. They can be written, read or spoken, and are descriptive in nature. There are hundreds of names of God in different languages, and they are all attributive. The Essential Name, on the other hand, is the True Name, which is the unspoken, unwritten, cosmic Law. It is the Creative Power of the Lord, which in the form of divine sound and divine light abides not only within man, but also in the whole world outside. The entire existence comes into being through the operation of this Word. That is why it is also described as the Decree or the Command of God (*Kun*). And it is through the experience of this *Kalma* that liberation from the never-ending cycle of birth and death can be achieved. The *Kalma* is the personal property of every human being,

but it is hidden from his physical eyes. It is primordial, all-pervading, all-powerful and all-knowing.

It is clear from the above account that although the attributive names of God are different in various religions and languages, the Essential Name is the same. For, it is the substance which has given rise to the attributive names. This does not mean however, that attributive names are altogether useless. They serve as the means for attaining the Essential or True Name. They are all pointers to our destination.

In an elaborate exposition of the two kinds of the Word or the Name, Soami Ji writes as follows :

Brother, I shall now define precisely what *Nam* is,
And disclose the difference between its two kinds.
They are called *Varnatmik* and *Dhunatmik*,
And here is the distinction between these two.
You may call it *Varn* or you may call it *Achhar*;
It is the one that can be spoken with the tongue.
Also, what can be used in reading and in writing,
Is the same that is called *Varnatmik*.
It is only a pointer to the *Dhunatmik*,
But without a Master that cannot be achieved.

Sar Bachan, p. 95

The Bible says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was
with God, and the Word was God.

John 1 : 1

Soami Ji conveys the same thought in his own words thus:

You will realize that *Nam*¹ and *Nami*² are one,
If you have the good fortune to meet a Master.

Sar Bachan, p. 95

1. The Name or the Word.

2. The Being who bears the Name.

Zati Kalma or Unstruck Melody

The following *kafi* of Bulleh Shah would serve as an example of his account of the Unstruck Melody emanating from the Lord :

Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute !³
 O, Lord of the flute, cowherd Ranjha,
 You are in tune with the whole world.
 You rejoice, but I am in dire misery.
 Pray, harmonize my tune with Yours.
 O flute-player, You are called the Lord.
 You reveal the peerless cosmic beauty,
 Albeit You remain invisible to the eyes.
 What a matchless game You play !

Everyone hears and talks of the music of the flute ;
 But it's the rare one who understands its meaning.
 Whosoever attains the joy of the Unstruck Melody,
 He becomes enamored of the flute.
 On hearing the sonorous notes of the flute,
 I shriek with joy in the manner of peacocks,
 For I rejoice in its variegated tunes.
 A single note lies behind the entire symphony !

This flute has five to seven stops,
 Each stop has its distinctive note.
 But one strain breathes through them all,
 And, it is this which has bewitched me.

1. Esoterically, music of the flute is audible at a high spiritual stage within. Rumi commences his great *Masnavi* from this stage. Its opening line is : "Listen to the flute as it narrates its tale, and complains of separation from its source."

This flute has a long account.¹
 Whosoever sought it, found it.
 Simple is the strain of this flute;
 The whole body is eloquent with His praise.
 O Bullah, all my troubles have come to an end.
 The Beloved has come and stands at the door.
 Now maintain your trade with the Word,
 Then your Master will stand as your witness.²

Bulleh Shah has written the entire *kafi* in adulation of the Unstruck Melody of the flute, but in the last stanza he has called it *Kalma*, the Word. It is clear from this identification, that he has used the "Unstruck Melody" and "the Word" in the same sense. He has called both God and the Master "Lord of the flute" or "Ranjha of the flute." From this it can be inferred that the essence of God and of the Master is the Word. Its being "in tune with the whole world" means that the Unstruck Melody resounds in the whole creation and in every being. "Pray, harmonize my tune with Yours" signifies that the underlying essence of the soul, the Word, the Master and the Lord is the same. It is for this reason that they can all merge into one another. Only the like can be absorbed into the like.

"Only the rare one understands the meaning of the flute music" hints at the extremely few people who are blessed with hearing the Unstruck Melody. It is those fortunate few, who begin to understand that all creation emanates from the Word. "A single note lies behind the entire symphony! And these fortunate ones "become enamored of the flute."

1. Refers to the limitless expanse of the Word.

2. Before the Dispenser of Justice, the Negative Power.

The line, "This flute has a long account," means that the scope of this divine melody is boundless. And, it is free from the stain of duality: "Simple is the strain of his flute."

The Unstruck Melody is basically one, but passing through different spiritual realms it assumes different forms. "This flute has five to seven stops, . . . But one strain breathes through them all."

At the end of the *kafi*, Bulleh Shah counsels that one should never forget the real aim of human life and should always maintain connection with the Word: "Maintain your trade with the Word." If this link is kept up, the Master will be present (in his astral form) at the time of the disciple's death to help him: "Your Master will stand as your witness."

In his poem, "Come fakirs, let us go to the assemblage," Bulleh Shah has called the Word, "Unstruck Music" (*Anhad da Vajja*) or "The Mystic's Music" (*Arif da Vajja*). He writes that the mystic practice does not lie in external observances such as wearing saffron clothes, but in connecting the mind to the unstruck music within. Without this union with the Word, the external gathering of fakirs in an assemblage is futile. Without such a union, human life and good actions all go waste "Your capital and interest both go down the drain." On the other hand, the one who connects himself with the Word, it raises him from man to God:

Come fakirs, let us go to the assemblage,
 and listen to the music of the mystic!
 There you will listen to the many-splendored
 Unstruck Melody, renouncing all rituals and
 ceremonies.

The unstruck music is all-uniting, foe to none;
 and it emanates from the orifice¹ of the head.
 Without the union the assemblage is fruitless;
 your capital and interest both go down the drain.
 Hard is mendicancy and the path of the lover,
 for you have to still the mind in that music.
 Such a lover becomes God from man,
 but Bullah has remained where he was.

Bulleh Shah, by calling the Word as God's Will or Decree, (*Kun Fayyakun*) has indicated that the Unstruck Melody also works as the Creative Power, which brings into existence the entire world. In one poem, he has described it as the path leading to the "Transcendent Being," and in another he has called it the call from the Celestial throne:

1. On the path leading to the Transcendent Being,
 I shall seat myself and play on the conch.
2. The call came from the Celestial throne,
 And a tumult arose in Mecca.

The praise of the Word is found in all mystic literature, whether in the East or the West, whether in one religion or another. And, in everyone of the statements made by them, its essential nature is clearly brought out. A short account supported by some quotations in various religions is given below.

Hinduism and the Word

The Hindu *rishis* have called the Word by many names: *Shabd*, *Nad*, *Vak*, *Akash Bani* (the Celestial

1. The opening in the center between and behind the two eyes, the third eye or eye center.

Sound), *Dibh Dhuni* (the Divine Melody), *Ram Dhun* (the Voice of God), etc. They have also regarded it as the Creative Power of the universe. In *Sama Veda* it is written that *Shabd* is God and *Shabd* is the Creator. The Upanishads are replete with adoration of the Word. .

1. "There is a hymn which celebrates *Vak* (Speech) as the supporter of the world, as the companion of the gods, and the foundation of religious activity and all its advantages . . . This idea which, of course, has long ago been compared by Weber with the Greek Logos is ingenious:

"The Will of the Creator is thus considered as expressed in Speech."¹

2. "Prajapati certainly was alone (before) this (Universe). The Word (Speech) certainly was His only possession . . . He desired: Let me emit this very Word, it will pervade the whole (span). It rose upward and spread as a continuous (well-joined) stream of water."²

Ancient Greek Religion and the Word

The ancient Greek sages and philosophers have given the name "Logos" to the Word. In praise of the Logos it has been said: "There is one Logos, the same throughout the world . . . This wisdom we may win by searching within ourselves . . . It is the cosmic process, it is God; it is the life principle; it is divine law, or will of God. It prevails as much as it will and is sufficient for all things. Logos is the immanent reason of the world; it exists from all time, yet men are unaware of it, both before they listen and when they hear it. The Logos

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1. *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*, Harvard and Oriental Series Vol. 32, pp. 435-36.
 2. Tandyabra 20: 14: 2, quoted by Bhagwat Datta in *Story of the creation*, p. 110.

... keeps the stars in their courses. It is the hidden harmony which underlines the discords and antagonisms of existences.”¹ Another philosopher writes in this context: “The Logos is intermediary between God and the world, being the regulating principle of the universe, the divine intelligence . . . As the way, the truth and the life, as the inspirer of the highest morality, and last and not the least, as the living bond of union between the various members of his body. The spirit goes through all things, formless itself, but the creator of forms. The Logos as World-Idea is also simple. It assumes manifold forms in its plastic self-unfolding.”²

The Jewish Religion and the Word

In Hebrew language the word “Memra” has been used for Logos of the Greeks and for Kalma of the Muslims. Some scholars have traced its origin to the word “Amar” of the Armenian language, which stands for “Word” or “Speech”. Usage of the word “Amar” is older than even of “Logos,” So, we cannot say that the Jews got the idea from the Greeks. It has been used for the divine Word, the divine Decree, manifestation of divine desire, as also for the creative power of God, the principle behind all creation. Last, but not least, it has been used as the Creative Being or God, himself. Even before the advent of the Christians, the Word was called primeval, creator of the universe and the Decree of God. This thought binds the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims in one chain from the spiritual point of view.³

1. Heraclitus of Ephesus (535-475 B.C.) Extract from *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. VIII pp. 135-137

2. Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.) Extract from *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. VIII pp. 135-137.

3. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Vol. VIII, pp. 542-43.

Christianity and the Word

In the *Bible* various other terms besides that of the “Word” have been used in the same sense. These are: the Logos, the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit and the Comforter. All of them denote the Creative Power of the Lord; and the power which can liberate man from the prison-house of this Creation.

The *Bible* says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”¹

Some other sayings pertinent to this theme are: “And I will pray to the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever.”² “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.”³ “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”⁴ The Name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”⁵ “Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.”⁶

Zoroastrianism and the Word

In the religious system founded by Zoroaster in Persia, the Word has been called “Sarosh.” Scholars have shown its resemblance with the Sanskrit words “Shabd,” and “Shruti,” and suggested that they were

1. John 1:1-4

2. John 14:16

3. John 14:26

4. John 4:23-24

5. Proverbs 18:10

6. Mathew 12:31

derived from the same root.¹ Also, like other terms used for the Word, "Sarosh" too has been considered as the ultimate divine power, from which has emanated the entire Creation.²

"Sarosh," which existed prior to earth, fire, vegetation and man is the manifest form of the Will of God. On the one hand it acts as the Creative Power, and on the other it teaches the noble lesson of cheerful acceptance of God's Will. Such acceptance is a necessary pre-requisite for spiritual progress.³ It is the viceroy of Ahurmazda (God) from the beginning of time. Its greatness is apparent from the prayer of Zoroaster: "Oh God, let "Sarosh" be granted to him, who is dear to You."⁴ Here its resemblance with the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, etc. of Christianity is noteworthy.⁵

Taoism and the Word

In the Chinese philosophical and religious system of Taoism, high praise has been showered on the greatness of the Tao.⁶ The Tao is primeval, and it is indescribable in words.⁷ The Tao has been identified with God Himself. It has also been called the Path, the Word, Discrimination, Decree, The Omniscient, the Unknown Essence of Creation, the Principle that moves the mind and the world, and so on.⁸ It has been regarded as the

1. From the same root as Sanskrit *Srutis*: Duncan Greenlees, *The Gospel of Zarathustra*, p. 54; also '*The Path of the Masters*', Julian P. Johnson p. 41-42, (13th Ed.)

2. Duncan Greenlees, *The Gospel of Zarathustra*, p. 52 (Yasara 57: 1-2)

3. Ibid.

4. Julian P. Johnson: *The Path of the Masters*, p. 41-42, (13th Ed.)

5. to 8. Southill, W.F.: *Three Religions of China*, London: Oxford University Press, 1929 (3rd. Ed.), p. 16

creative, the preservative and the destructive ground of the universe.¹

The Tao is no concrete object, but all objects emanate from it. It is formless, but all forms become visible through it.² Man is governed by earthly laws; the earthly laws are governed by divine laws; the divine laws are governed by the Tao, and the Tao is its own law.³ The Tao in its primeval state is nameless, but when it manifested itself in creation and in creeds, it acquired names.⁴ It is not only the root cause of creation, it is the principle which guides it and the ideal for all things.⁵ It is beyond good and evil, and is indicative of that state of bliss, the attainment of which is the very essence of the Tao.⁶ The Tao is the guiding principle for true morality, true religion, true spirituality and true conduct.

When the practice of the Tao ceased, the stress was shifted to morality, and then it was laid on intellect and cleverness.⁷ But, nothing can replace the Tao. Only by returning to one's source can eternal peace be achieved.⁸

Islam, Sufism, and the Word

In the *Qura'n*, the *Kalma* or the Word has been called all-powerful.⁹ Whatever it commands, it comes to pass.¹⁰ The Word of God is True.¹¹ On whomsoever God is merciful, He sends His *Kalma* through His Decree.¹² The Name of God is auspicious ; it is pure, and it bestows greatness on the one who practices it.¹³

1. to 6. Southill, W.F: *Three Religions of China*, London: Oxford University Press, 1929 (3rd. Ed.) p. 16.

7. James Legge: *The Texts of Taoism*, Tao Teh King, Part 81 : 1.

8. Ibid 16 : 1

9. *Qura'n* 9 : 39

10. Ibid 36 : 82

11. Ibid 6 : 73

12. Ibid 40 : 15

13. Ibid. 55 : 78

The Sufis have accepted *Kalma* or *Saut* (Sound) as the creative power of the world. The sufi-saints have written profusely on it. A few examples are: "The world has come into being through the Sound. And, from it has spread light on all sides."¹ "The Great Name is the source of all names. It is the inner reality of all things. It is the ocean, and the world is its mere wave. But he alone knows it, who is one of us."² In other words, this secret is known only to the mystics. "The whole world is replete with Sound. But, you have to open your inner ear. You will then hear that never-ending melody, and you will cross the gate of death and go beyond the beginning and end of things."³ "Since the word has no limits, it has been called 'limitless' (*anhad*)"⁴ "O God, how sweet is your Name! My very existence has become sugar and honey in it. O God, What rapture is there in Your Name! Every letter in it puts me into ecstasy."⁵ Rumi goes on, in adoration, to call it the essence of all existence. "The Great Name is the Great God Himself. It is the core of existence, and puts to life even dead bones."⁶ "O God, Thy holy Name is my true friend. Thy Great Name brings me close to Thee."⁷

Sultan Bahu, a great mystic poet from Punjab has written much in praise of the Word. Says he about the True or Essential *Kalma*: "Where the *Kalma* is recited by the heart, there the tongue has no admittance. *Kalma* of the heart is read by lovers. What do our naive friends know about it?" The practice of this *Kalma* is by no means easy. It demands a heavy price for its attainment:

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1. Shams-i-Tabriz.
 2. Abdul Razzak Kashi.
 3. Shah Niaz.
 4. Ibid.
 5. to 7. Jalal-ud-Din Rumi: *Masnavi*.

“Sleep is prohibited for them, O Bahu, who earn the profit of *zati* Name.” But what they achieve after their great labor is worth all the trouble they have gone through: “They perform ablution with the Great Name, who bathe in the ocean of Unity.” Continuing, Bahu says that the *Kalma* is the greatest Creative Power: “All the fourteen realms emanate from the *Kalma*. What do the simple folk know?” “All the fourteen realms are contained in the *Kalma*, as also the *Qura’n*, the holy books and all the books of knowledge.” The Word is the greatest treasure, which has no peer anywhere outside: “There is no blessing like the *Kalma*, none within the two worlds.” “The *Kalma* is my rubies, my diamonds, the *Kalma* is my richest merchandise. Here, as also in the hereafter, O Bahu, *Kalma* is my total wealth.” It is through the Word, that one learns to die before the appointed time of his death. It takes him out of the delusion of duality into the reality of the One: “He will not die the death of mortals, in whom eternal love has been awakened. To him death and union will be the same, for he has practiced the *zati* Name of God.” There is no prayer worth the name, from which the practice of the Word is absent: “Who tries to earn spiritual merit without the practice of the *Kalma*, verily he dies as an infidel, in the manner of one gone crazy. Even if he were to worship for a hundred years, he would remain a stranger to God.”

Saints and the Word

Writings of saints are replete with praise of the Word, and on its practice are based their main teachings. The Word is not only the Creative Power, but is also immanent in everything. And, above all it resides

within man himself. Says Guru Nanak: "From the Word comes the earth, from the Word comes the sky, from the Word spreads light all around. The whole creation rests on the Word, and this Word, O Nanak, resides within man."¹ In this context, Guru Amar Das writes: "Through the Word comes all creation into being, and through the Word it goes out of existence."² Saint Dadu Dyal conveys the same thought thus: "O Dadu, all remain cohesive through the Word, and without the Word all disintegrate. Through the Word are all created, and in the Word they all merge. Of the One Word is all this fiat; so great is the power of the Word! It would have been quite different, had the Word been powerless." Guru Arjun Dev, in praise of the Word, writes: "His Name is the cure for all our ills. Sing its praises, as it gives salvation."³

THE MASTER

Need of a Guide

God, the Supreme Being, the Ultimate Reality is within, and so is the soul, which is of the essence of God. Although both are within man, yet there is a veil between them, which does not let them meet each other. It is like the bride and the bridegroom being in the same bedchamber, and yet the bride remaining unaware of the presence of her spouse. It is like a man with immense wealth lying in his house, but who roams like a beggar seeking it outside. The only way in which the bride can find her Lord and the beggar can find his treasure is

1. *Puratan Janamsakhi*, p. 137.

2. *Adi Granth*: M.3. p. 117.

3. *Adi Granth*: M.5. p. 274.

through the Word, which makes the necessary contact between the seeker and the sought. If the Word can solve the problem, in which man finds himself, the question arises: What is the part that the Master has to play in this drama?

In a superficial sense the Master gives nothing from himself, but in a deeper sense his role is the most important. Since by God's design the wealth of the Word is already within every man, so the master does not give it from himself. But, from another point of view, he may be said to give everything. If a great treasure is hidden in a man's house, but he does not know how to obtain it, he is actually a pauper. If someone does not only tell him where it is lying, but also gives him all practical help and guidance to get it, he has virtually turned a beggar into a king. This is the role played by the Master for his disciple.

In the words of Soami Ji "The Guru is he who is one with the Word."¹ One who is in contact with the Word can bestow the supreme gift of such contact on others. That is why all great mystics refer to their masters in superlative terms of praise and adoration. They ascribe their entire achievement to their Master's grace, even when they themselves worked hard for it. In fact the individual's own effort emanates from the Master's grace, though apparently the two seem quite different. Whether we consider them integral or separate they are necessary for salvation. Says Soami Ji:

Without the Master's grace,
and without your own effort,
You will not be released from
the cycle of birth and death.

Sar Bachan, p. 122)

1. Sar Bachan, p. 105.

Bulleh Shah is no exception to this rule and his writings are replete with love, gratitude and adoration for his *Murshid*, Inayat Shah. A few examples are given below:

1. Listen to the tale of Bulleh Shah.
He caught hold of his guide to follow him.
His *Murshid* is Shah Inayat.
He will ferry him across the gulf.
2. Whosoever wishes to have a vision of Him,
He cannot do so without an intermediary.
If Shah Inayat were to reveal the secret,
Then all mysteries would be solved.
3. The land of the Beloved is across the river,
And the waves of avarice have engulfed me.
The *Satguru* is holding the boat,
Why do you tarry?
4. Come soon, O physician, or else
I shall breathe my last!

Comparing the human body to the spinning wheel, Bulleh Shah calls the spiritual practice 'spinning'. In the following *kafi* he hints that in withdrawing the soul current from the nine outlets into the tenth door, and protecting it from the stratagems of the Negative power, the help that the Master renders to the disciple is invaluable:

The handle of the spinning-wheel has slipped down;
I can now spin no more!
The spindle has got many a bend, who would now
call the iron-smith?
Straighten out the spindle, O iron-smith;
the thread gets broken again and again;

Every now and then it swings, it does not produce
a single hank of yarn.

I shall deem to have spun a hundred maunds,
O Bullah,

If the Beloved were to clasp me to his heart.

Rizvi, in discussing the role of a master (Sheikh) writes: "The *Tariqa* was an arduous journey involving numerous risks and impediments. It could be traversed only under the strict supervision of Sheikhs or *pirs* who had themselves traversed all the hills and dales of the Path, and had survived the rapture of the 'states,' perceived the nature of actions, and experienced the severity of 'Divine Majesty' and the clemency of 'Divine Beauty'¹ All these obstacles confronted by a disciple "needed constant supervision by a Sheikh."²

Elaborating on what the Master does for his disciple, Bulleh Shah writes:

Catch hold of your *Murshid*, for therein lies
God's worship.

In his love you are carefree and in raptures;
In his love you are free from desire and possessions;
And your heart becomes cleansed of all impurities.

O Bullah, how long can you hold back truth?

Wisdom is contained in a single point !

The Master's power is not confined to guidance in this life. At the crucial moment of death, when all relatives and friends are helpless in rendering any help to the dying man, it is the Master who comes to his rescue :

1. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi: *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I., p. 99.

2. Ibid.

Your testing time will surely come,
 When all near and dear ones will desert you.
 At that time the Sultan of Bullah
 Will help you to be ferried across.
 Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

Because of the overwhelming spiritual influence of a true Master, a radical change takes place in a devoted disciple. He virtually becomes a different person after his contact with the Master. Bulleh Shah writes about the metamorphic change wrought in him by his Master, Inayat Shah:

My Guide taught me a lesson,
 No stranger had admittance there.
 He showed me the beauty of the Absolute Lord.
 And a tumult of unity overwhelmed me!
 Who can now recognize me?
 Now I have become a different person.

After the realization of the all-powerful nature of a Master, Bulleh Shah spoke out: "The Guru does whatever he likes." And, after such intimate relationship has been established between the disciple and the Master, as came to exist between Bulleh Shah and Inayat Shah, separation is extremely painful to bear. If it happens to come, there is intense longing for union, as is obvious from the following lines of Bullah:

O Bullah, may the Spouse come to my home,
 And quench the fire burning within me!
 I remember Inayat with every breath,
 Come and meet me, my Love!

Bulleh Shah's love for his Master, intense though it is, does not always take the form of veneration. Often, in

the mood of a lover's playfulness, it expresses itself in a complaining tone on the fraudulent attitude of the beloved. His occasional appearance interspersed with periods of vanishment is tantalizing for the lover. Says Bullah in an incriminating tone:

Look, what tricks he plays with me,
My Master and Lord, Shah Inayat!
Sometimes he comes, and sometimes not,
Thus he enkindles a fire in my heart.

Some scholars have compared Bulleh Shah's philosophy to that of Rumi. In fact, some of them have called him the Rumi of Punjab.¹ Doubtless, Bulleh Shah's love for Inayat Shah is reminiscent of Rumi's love for Shams-i-Tabriz. This is what Rumi says about the role the master plays in the disciple's spiritual progress and ultimate realization: "The path leading to the Friend is extremely narrow. Who can walk straight on it without a sagacious guide? This arduous journey is beset with deep gorges, which cannot be crossed without the one who shows the path." That is why that gracious King ordained: "First, find a companion for the journey, and then undertake to travel on the path." Look for a guide, so that you may reach your goal without harm, for there is many a pitfall on the way. You are revolving round the same spot like a compass, so you remain where you are without any progress. For years on end you performed prayers and undertook fasts, but your heart stayed where it was at first. Have faith in the guide, who will take you to your destination without a word. To disregard the command of your Master is like shooting

1. Such as Anwar Ali Rohtaki and Taufiq Rafat..

an arrow without a bow. Have you ever seen an arrow without a bow, reach its target or even nearabout it?

The Perfect Master

The term “master” has been used for one who has himself traversed all the stages on the spiritual path and has ultimately become one with the Lord by merging into Him. To make this clear, saints and mystics have sometimes added the word “perfect” to the word “master”, for an imperfect guide can take one only to a stage, where he himself has reached, and no further. So, if the goal is God-realization, a perfect Master, who himself has reached the final destination, is indispensable. A perfect Master is both man and God. He is a man, because he has the human form, but he is also God, because he has spiritually become one with Him. This is God’s own design, because in no other way can He be realized. In His abstract form there can be no contact with God. So, He has to assume the human form to take man out of darkness into light, out of ignorance into knowledge, and out of bondage into freedom. When Bulleh Shah had the vision of God in his Master, he blurted out: “The Beloved has come as man!” and “God has come as man!” In a few more *kafis* he comes out with the same thought :

1. He is not a cowherd¹ but some light of God.
He plays the unstruck melody on His flute.
He has beguiled Heer of Syal with His charm.
2. Bullah, He² has come from afar!
His form has attracted me.

1. Used for Ranjha.

2. ‘He’ stands for the Master.

He showed me his pure effulgence.¹
I cannot forget him for a moment.

3. You would enjoy the delights of spring,
if you were to become slave of the *Arain*.²
O Bullah, fix your gaze on him forever,
For he is the vision of the Lord.
4. O Beloved, to meet you is to end all suffering.
For the common folk you are a mere cowherd;
For me you are the compassionate Lord Himself.

Other saints too have dwelt on the theme of identity between God and the Master. In a beautiful analogy, Guru Arjun Dev says: "The Lord's servant is like unto the Lord. Think him not to be different because of his human form. As a wave he arises in a myriad ways from the ocean, and then merges into it again."³

Physical Love and Spiritual Love

Sufi saints have the tradition to regard the *Murshid* as the ladder for reaching the formless Lord. The *Murshid* is the mirror which reflects the glory of God. Bulleh Shah has called the physical form of the Master as the bridge that takes the disciple to his Master's real form. He states that unless one is in love with a form, there can be no love for the formless one. Love of the form is a thread, which sews the garb of love of the Formless. So long as the Lord does not come in the human form as a giver, how can the gift of divine love be obtained? Love for the Master is our real father and mother, because it gives birth to divine love. It is love for the form of the Master, through which the disciple

1. Divine light or vision of God.

2. Vegetable grower, here stands for Inayat Shah, Bulleh Shah's Master.

3. *Adi Granth* : M. 5., p. 1076.

learns to die while still living and thereby attains union with the Lord within:

So long as one falls not in physical love,¹
 The needle cannot sew without thread in it.
 Physical love is a giver, a benefactor.
 Whosoever is blessed by it, gets into raptures.
 People in whose bones love makes its abode,
 They verily die while they are still living.
 Love is our father as well as our mother.
 Whosoever it pursues, gets into a frenzy.

Jami, a great Persian poet, says in this context: "Consider yourself to be fortunate, if you fall in physical love. For, it is a means to raise you to love divine."

In this context, Bulleh Shah, making use of his favorite story of Heer and Ranjha, has brought out the true relationship between the soul and her Master. The eyes of the Master have shown the precious jewel, the Lord. His face reflects the beauty of Yusuf (the Lord). In its native state the soul is formless and luminous, but with the coverings of body and mind, as a yogin, its brilliance remains concealed. It is for this reason that Ranjha (the Lord) has to come to this world in the guise of a yogi (human form). But, when Heer sees in the yogi the sign (the attributes) of Ranjha, she is drawn spontaneously towards Him. Love of the soul for her Lord, which had been lying dormant from time immemorial, is now awakened. In her new realization she regrets the wastage of time spent before her newly-awakened love. When her love for and faith in the yogi becomes perfect, he takes her with him to the throne of Hazara (her final destination, the True Abode), which brings to an end all suffering involved in transmigration:

1. Physical love here means the love of the physical form of the Master.

Ranjha has come in the guise of a yogi;
Oh, what a mask He has worn!

This yogi has eyes like goblets,
Beaming their glances like those of a hawk.¹
On beholding his face all cares vanish;
These eyes have seen a precious jewel.²
What are the marks of this yogi?
He wears ear-rings and has a string of beads
round his neck.

His visage reflects the beauty of Yusuf.³
He has turned *Alif* into *Ahad*.⁴
Ranjha is my yogi, I am His yogin;
I shall serve Him like a slave.
In vain have I wasted my earlier life.
Now He has come and charmed me!
It is now that Bullah revels in His presence.
His old love has stirred up a storm in his heart.
How can this now be kept a secret?
He takes me along to the throne of Hazara.⁵

Ranjha has come in the guise of a yogi;
Oh, what a mask He has worn!

In another *kafi* Bulleh Shah employs the same analogy of Heer and Ranjha, and indicates that after giving the command of creation (*Kun Fayyakun*), Ranjha (the Lord) leaves the Throne of Hazara (His True Abode) to bring back Heer (the soul). But in the land of Chuchak and Malki⁶ (mind and maya), Ranjha had to assume the form of a cowherd. When, however, Heer was being forcibly sent with the Kheras (the Ego

1. He has searching looks. The allusion is to God seeking the soul of man.

2. and 3. The Lord.

4. Alludes to the transformation of the Absolute into God.

5. The true Abode, the final destination.

6. Father and mother of Heer.

and Satan), then Ranjha had to disguise himself as a yogi (The Lord in the human form of a Master) to release Heer from the clutches of the Kheras. In the land of the Kheras, Ranjha would go only to the house He was interested in, and not care for any other house. This signifies that the Lord comes to emancipate only those souls, which would be happy in going back to Him, and not those which cherish sense-pleasures and are happy to stay in this world.

On the other hand, the soul which spurns all the allurements offered by the Kheras (sense-pleasures), and pines for union with Ranjha (the Lord), the yogi (the Master) readily comes to her door. What is the mantra which the yogi recites to bring back Heer? He plays on the conch at her door (he connects her with the Divine Melody within). He spreads grain or millet at her door, and begins to sift it, but during the process of sifting (in the course of worldly activities), the eyes of the yogi are ever fixed on Heer. When Heer recognizes the eyes of Ranjha in the eyes of the yogi, she is thrilled and in ecstasy accompanies him to the Throne of Hazara:

Why do You tarry, Love? I am a sacrifice unto You.

Soon after the Command to create,

Ranjha departed from the Throne of Hazara.

He let himself be called the servant of Chuchak,

when He was the Lord himself.

The yogi comes to the city of the Kheras,

he goes to a house where he has a motive.

He plays on the conch at the door;

he carries on him the grace of the Lord.

At the door, he picks up a quarrel without reason;

his vessel gets broken, his grain gets littered.

Who can see through his trick ?
 His grain got trodden in dust.
 He keeps his gaze on Heer, while dispensing
 grain to people.
 Whatever is written in destiny, one gets it;
 bitter tears fight like soldiers.
 Why do you tarry, Love?

In yet another *kafi*, "I shall go with the yogi after applying vermilion to my forehead," Bulleh Shah deals with the same theme. To attain union with the Lord through love with the physical form of the Master is exquisitely conveyed in this poem. In it he calls the yogi (the Master) the light of God, and the flute-player of unstruck melody, who through his magnetic charm captivates the heart of Heer. He overwhelms Heer to the extent that she becomes oblivious of herself, as also of the world. Immersed in her love for the yogi, she follows him, as if in a trance, to his land:

I shall go with the yogi after applying
 vermilion¹ to my forehead!
 I shall certainly go. Who is there who can hold me
 back?
 It is hard for me to return after all the reproaches
 hurled on me.
 He is not a mere yogi, he is my heart's desire.
 I know not why I ever fell in love.
 But I lost all sense after a glimpse of him.
 He is not a mere friend, he is the very light of God.
 He recites unstruck melody on the flute.
 He has bewitched Heer of Syal with his magic.

1. A sign of marriage in a Hindu woman.

O Bullah, I am wedded with the yogi.
 Foolish people have no knowledge of it.
 I am the property of the yogi, after pacifying
 the five *pirs*.¹
 I shall go with the yogi, after applying
 vermilion to my forehead!

The *kafi* beginning with the line, "Who has come after wearing an attire?" also hints at the divine Reality hidden behind the physical form of the Master. At another place, Bulleh Shah calls the Master "the cowherd of the unstruck (*anhad*) door," who puts on the garb of a yogi for the love of Heer:

The cowherd of the unstruck door has come,
 with bracelets round his wrist.
 He has shaved his head for the sake of my love,
 and dust has filled his ears.

The Living Master

It is indeed strange that we can have faith in ancient saints and mystics, i.e. dead masters, but find it difficult to bring forth such faith in a living master. When those masters were alive, they were generally persecuted by their contemporaries, because their teachings were considered heretical. Recognition for them only came later, after they were dead and gone from this world. This attitude in men persists even to this day. It seems "the way of the world is to persecute living saints and worship dead ones."²

1. Sense-organs ; it signifies controlling the five cognitive senses.
 2. Oscar Wilde.

This is not to denigrate the greatness of past saints and masters. They bestowed immense benefit to the people living in their times and those who came in contact with them. A living saint is as indispensable for a seeker to attain God-realization as is a living husband necessary for a woman to beget children. A sick man needs a living physician to get cured of his illness, although the past has known excellent doctors. A student, despite such great teachers as Plato and Aristotle, needs the practical guidance of a living teacher to acquire knowledge and wisdom.

When great doctors, musicians, generals, painters, philosophers and scientists can be born at any time, and in any country, why should the birth of saints and masters be confined to a specific time and to a particular country, religion or nationality? If the Lord has bestowed the blessings of air, water, earth and light to people without any discrimination, why would He distribute opportunities for their spiritual growth in so unjust a manner? Just as He has given great reformers to people for the solution of their worldly problems from time to time, so also He has sent saints and masters in all ages for satisfying their spiritual needs.

The scriptures do not deny the existence of such saviors in the form of saints and prophets in all ages. For instance, a verse in the *Qura'n* says: "We believe in God and in what has been revealed to us, as well as to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and their descendents; we also believe in what was given to Moses, Jesus and to all the prophets raised by the Creator of the Universe; we accept all of them, without making any distinction among them."¹ A Sufi saint of the mid-ninth century,

1. Sirdar Ikbal Ali Shah in "*Islamic Sufism*", Samuel Weiser Inc., New York, 1971, p. 35.

Tirmuzi (died 851-52 A. D.) asserts that the coming to this world of men of God, the spiritual saviors, is a continuous process and no age is devoid of them: "Who can prevent the mercy of God from prevailing over people even in these modern times? Nobody can check it, for it is continuous. Do they think that there is no *siddiq*¹, no *muqarrab*², no *mujtaba*³, no *mustafa*⁴ nowadays?"⁵ In the *Adi Granth* too, the continuous presence of masters in this world is confirmed in unambiguous terms at many places. Here it may suffice for us to give, one instance: "Age after age, at all times, unto eternity, the line of Gurus continues. In all ages the line of True Gurus runs, who dwell in the Lord's Name."⁶

Insistence on guidance by a living Master is no less obvious in several of the *kafis* of Bulleh Shah. In fact, the dominant feature in most of his compositions is love for his Master, Inayat Shah. Love for the *Murshid*, is, as it were, the kingpin of his teachings. In one of his *kafis*, Bulleh Shah calls the Master, the merchant who deals in precious stones, the seller of rubies. He warns people that the jeweler is there only for a short time, and the opportunity in striking a rare bargain should not be lost. (The Master in the human form is in our midst for a short time, and we should avail of the opportunity for buying⁷ the precious merchandise of *Nam*). After the departure of the Master, the secret of the Word will remain unraveled.

1. Faithful witness of the truth.

2. Intimate friend.

3. and 4. Chosen ; Mustafa is also a name of Muhammed.

5. "*A History of Sufism*", Vol. I, p. 41.

6. *Adi Granth*, M. 4, p. 79.

7. Buying, not with money, but with spiritual practice.

Strike a bargain, the merchant is here.
 Such a chance will not come again.
 Make haste to buy the precious stone,
 For the tradesman will soon depart,
 Nothing will be possible to do that day,
 When the bugle will summon you with the last call.
 You are loath to live the life of piety;
 How long will you issue imperious commands?

A few other lines from the *kafis* on the same theme are given below:

1. In this forest of love the peacock gives a call.
 My lovely friend appears to me both as *Ka'ba* and *qibla*¹.
2. O Bulleh Shah, sit at the door of Inayat,²
 Who has made you wear garments red and green.³
3. Whatever color I am dyed in, it is verily a deep color.
 It has the glow of my *Murshid*, O friend!
4. Look, what tricks he plays with me.
 My Master and Lord, Shah Inayat!
 Sometimes he comes, and sometimes not.
 Thus he enkindles a fire in my heart.
 O' bring me the message of *Nam* from God;
 And deprive me not of a glimpse from you.
5. The Spouse of Bullah, Inayat, is all-knowing.
 He is the captor of my heart and the master of my soul.
 I am iron, and he is the philosopher's stone.
 You, O Lord, are ever in touch with him.

1. The altar of the *Ka'ba* in Mecca.
 2. Inayat Shah, the Master of Bulleh Shah.
 3. The bright colors signifying the dress of a bride.

LEARNING AND SPIRITUALITY

The Pedant and the Mystic

Like other saints and masters, Bulleh Shah has made a sharp distinction between knowledge gained through the study of scriptures and holy books and that gained through personal spiritual experience. Since he himself was a highly learned man, he was fully aware of the limitations of bookish knowledge and erudition. This awareness became all the more sharp, when he attained the mystic experience through the guidance of his Master, who apparently was an unlettered man. When Bulleh Shah first met his *Murshid*, Inayat Shah, the Master was transplanting onion seedlings from one place to another. Little did Bulleh Shah know at that time, that the simple vegetable-grower was an adept in implanting the Word of God in the hearts of true seekers.

When he came in close contact with his *Murshid*, Bulleh Shah realized his Master's spiritual greatness as also his high moral conduct. The qualities of a realized soul began to appear in sharp contrast with the character of scholars and learned men. He saw that men of learning and scholars made use of their erudition for amassing material wealth and gaining worldly fame, whereas Inayat Shah was content with leading a simple, pure life, and was distributing gratis, the great spiritual wealth that he possessed, to true seekers. This led him to proclaim spontaneously: "O Bullah, if you seek the pleasures of the spring season, become a slave of the *Arain*"¹

1. Literally, the vegetable-grower, here it stands for Inayat Shah.

That no scholastic knowledge is required on the path to God-realization is conveyed thus by Bulleh Shah :

With 'A'¹ my heart is steeped in love for the Lord;
 I have no knowledge whatsoever of 'B'².
 The study of 'B' gives me no understanding.
 I have relished only the bliss of 'A'
 I knew no distinction between 'Ain'³ and 'Ghain'⁴
 Through 'A' I learnt their difference.
 O Bullah, their utterances of 'A' are perfect,
 Whose hearts have been cleansed of dross.

In another oft-recited *kafi*, Bulleh Shah points to the same truth:

I have acquired much verified knowledge,
 But only one letter⁵ is true in it.
 All other disputation is futile.
 In vain does it raise a tumult!
 Words that come to my tongue cannot be held back.

Spiritual and Bookish Knowledge

In sufi language spiritual or mystic knowledge has been called *Ilm-i-Sina*,⁶ whereas knowledge from books has been given the name *Ilm-i-Safina*.⁷ Bulleh Shah considers knowledge from scriptures, devoid of practical application, as a 'bundle of woes'. The erudite scholars

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1. Originally, *Alif* (ا), the first letter of the Arabic/Persian/Urdu alphabet. It stands for unity, the One, God.
 2. Originally *Be* (ب), the second letter of the alphabet. It stands for all that is other than God.
 3. & 4. The letters *Ain* (ع) and *Ghain* (غ) have the difference only of a dot. Esoterically, it signifies the reflection of God in the Master. Elsewhere, Bullah writes : "As is the form of *Ain*, so is the form of *Ghain*."
 5. *Alif*, the letter for Allah. It symbolizes the unity of God.
 6. Literally, knowledge from the heart.
 7. Knowledge from books.

are adept in hair-splitting over the holy scriptures, but they are ignorant of all inner spiritual secrets. They have neither any personal experience of the Reality within, nor do they try to mold their lives in accordance with the teachings from scriptures. The aim of scriptures is to show the path of Truth and to render help in attaining it. A knowledge which neither purifies the heart, nor tames the restive mind, of what use is it to man? Says Bulleh Shah:

Why do you read a cart-load of books?
 You carry on you a bundle of woes.
 The journey ahead is replete with perils.
 You memorize the holy *Qura'n* by heart,
 And keep your gaze fixed on the reward.

On the futility of mere recitation of scriptures, without any spiritual practice in the wake of it, Guru Nanak strongly denounces it thus:

If we were to recite scriptures year after year,
 If we were to recite them month after month;
 Nay, if we were to recite them all our life,
 And spend every breath in this pursuit,
 Only one thing will count in the end, O Nanak,
 All else is futile, sheer waste and strain.¹

The Persian mystic and philosopher, Sanai, went to the extent of saying that "knowledge which does not take you to the destination of Reality, only ends by aggravating your ignorance."

One who has intellectually grasped the theory of Reality has not necessarily tamed his mind and

1. *Adi Granth* : M. 1, p. 467.

controlled his passions. He may tender advice to others on matters spiritual, but himself may be vexed by doubts and suspicions. There is no conformity between his speech and conduct. His life is all hypocrisy and cant. To such a one Bullah says:

You read and administer homilies every day;
But you eat the food of doubt and suspicion.
You preach one thing and practice another.
You are false within and true without!

Gather no more knowledge, O Friend!
You read and read, and pile up a heap;
The *Qura'n* and other books lie all around you.
All around is light, but within you is darkness.
Without the guide there can be no knowledge.
Gather no more knowledge, O friend!

Many of Bulleh Shah's couplets harp on the same theme. He finds the hypocritical way of life of people, especially of preachers and the clergy, intolerable. Here, two of his couplets are given as examples:

1. Mullahs and torch-bearers come from the same stock;
They give light to others, and themselves are in the dark.
2. All else is mere chatter, talk only of God.
Some confusion comes from scholars, some from books.

Pedantry, Discrimination and Action

The aim of knowledge, according to Bulleh Shah, is to awaken our faculty of discrimination. Knowledge

should enable us to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil. The pedant who claims to be a man of vision, is in reality blind. He is blind to all higher values, because he does not distinguish between good and bad, and between a man of God and a man of the world. He is a loser in this world as also in the hereafter. A knowledge which inflames passions and desires instead of extinguishing them, should better be avoided. A knowledge which incites one to dishonesty and arouses in him avarice to possess others' property, does not make him dear to God, says Bullah. It is better to be illiterate and ignorant with a pure heart than to be learned and scholarly with a heart full of cunning and deceit. It is to bring out these truths that Bulleh Shah writes:

1. By such knowledge many complications arise;
Though endowed with eyes you are totally blind.
You capture saints and let go thieves;
You are disgraced in both the worlds.
Gather no more knowledge, O friend!
2. By constant reading mullahs become *Qazis*,
But God is happy without such knowledge.
Their greed is whetted day after day.
Their acts are aimed at personal gain.
Gather no more knowledge, O friend!
3. Much knowledge was acquired by Satan;
His hearth and home were burnt to ashes.
A necklace of curses was hung round his neck.
And, at last, he lost the game!
Gather no more knowledge, O friend!
4. O Bullah, in the divine temple God asked men
for an account of their acts.

He kept pundits and learned away from Him,
and beckoned to Him the simpletons.

5. Enough of this learning, O friend!
Only *Alif* is required on the path.

The well-known Sufi saint, Khwaja Abu Ismail Abdulla Ansari (1005-1090 A.D.) writes: "One person has continued to gather knowledge for seventy years, but has not been able to experience a spark of light within him. Another man has remained unlettered and ignorant, but has succeeded in hearing the divine melody within him, and remains immersed in it. The latter is far superior to the former. On this path (of spirituality) arguments and logic serve no purpose. Seek with all sincere effort, and you may have the glimpse of Reality." Khwaja Hafiz, too, warns us against the sermons delivered by pedants. Says he: "Listen not to the harangues of one who does not practice what he says. Keep him at an arm's length, and proceed to the wine-cellar (where lives the cup-bearer, the Master, the dispenser of the wine of love)". Rumi in one of his verses, comparing worldly knowledge with divine or spiritual knowledge, says: "Knowledge which emanates from the body (matter) acts like a snake; knowledge which emanates from the heart is a friend."

The thoughts expressed above do not mean that the study of scriptures and holy books is a waste of time and energy. Saints and mystics spent many precious years of their lives to compose their works for our benefit. But, it is impressed upon us in their very books that salvation will not come by sheer recitation or reading of them. Release from the cycle of birth and death can be attained through love for God and practice of the Word.

A mere repetition of the praise of sunlight by a man sitting in a long dark tunnel will not bring him out in the sun. This objective can be gained only by actual movement to cover the distance of the tunnel from one end to the other. To have faith in the existence of God and to recite or chant hymns from holy scriptures is not enough. If union with the Lord is the goal to be achieved, spiritual practice of the Word is indispensable.

From the point of view of research, from the point of view of discovering Truth, from the point of view of removing doubts, or from the point of view of getting acquainted with the principles of spirituality, the study of scriptures and holy books is highly beneficial. But the real gain from such study lies in molding our lives in accordance with the knowledge acquired, and in attaining the final goal of God-realization.

The study of holy scriptures is our beginning, not our end. Theoretical knowledge of a science needs to be confirmed through practical experiments. That is why saints and mystics have repeatedly stressed in their writings, that knowledge conveyed in their books relates to *their* experience. For us, it is only testimony, a second-hand confirmation. It should inspire us to gain *our* experience, which was the real aim of writing these books.

RITUALISM AND SPIRITUALITY

Every orthodox religion is wedded to its own body of rituals, customs and external observances. Also, it considers its own system superior to those of others.

Consequently, it has usually been a source of conflict between one religious group and others. But saints and mystics look at all with the same eye. Junaid, an Arab mystic, says: "The *Arif* could not be an *Arif* until he is like earth upon which the pious and impious walk; and like the clouds that are spread over everything; and like the rains that descend upon all places quite without any likes and dislikes."¹ The Lord belongs to the whole world. He is not the sole possession of any particular group. Perfect saints and mystics, who have become one with the Lord, make no invidious distinctions between man and man. They are not tied down to any particular set of rituals. They are well-wishers of all mankind, because they are in love with God, and see Him reflected in everyone. Says Bulleh Shah:

True love has beguiled me, O friend!
 Reveal to me the land of my Beloved.
 At my parents' I was an innocent maid.
 With love to me He has robbed me of my heart.
 Logic, semantics and a store of knowledge—
 Such pedantry has left me devoid of Him.
 Of what use are fasts and prayers to them,
 Who have drunk deep from the font of love?
 Sitting in the company of the Spouse,
 Bullah is free from all rituals, O friend!

If, at times, saints are critical of the pursuit of a wrong path, it is with the sole purpose of saving men from going astray. Their intentions are always noble. They do not want people to waste the rare opportunity of the human birth in useless activities. In fact, they

1. *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I, p. 57.

sacrifice their own comfort and often their lives for the good of mankind. They serve as lighthouses for posterity. But people turn against them during their lifetime, because they denounce the trodden path of empty ritualism. To guard against attacks from people, they often resort to the device of giving indirect hints in their writings. In a famous *kafi* Bulleh Shah says:

If I tell a lie, something is left out;
 If I speak out the truth, there is a blaze.
 My mind fears both the alternatives,
 But haltingly my tongue speaks out.
 Words that come to my tongue cannot be held back.
 If I were to unravel the mysteries,
 All would forget to discuss and debate.
 They would then kill our friend Bullah,
 For only the hidden truth befits here.

The strongest denunciation of empty rituals and external observances is contained in the following couplet of Bulleh Shah:

Accursed be prayers, to hell with fasts,
 and let confession of faith be damned.
 O Bullah, I have found the Lord within,
 and the world wanders in delusion!

Forgetting this strong criticism for a moment, let us reflect a little deeply about the ritualistic practices that people resort to. For their entire lives they visit temples, mosques, churches, synagogues and the like. They recite and chant hymns there. They pray and they worship their deities. For the same purpose they go on

pilgrimage to holy places. They keep fasts and practice various kinds of austerities. They give alms in charity to the poor and the needy. Have they ever experienced even the slightest spark of divine light? In contrast to all this, Bulleh Shah proclaims that he found the Lord within himself. He admonishes the true seekers of God not to waste time and energy in seeking Him outside. God is within and so is the path leading to Him. And this path is free from the practice of all external observances of every religion. So long as one's mind is not pure and God has not been realized, the hypocritical display of religiosity is contemptible. Says Bulleh Shah:

You have wasted your life in mosques.
 Your heart is still filled with impiety.
 Never did you realize the unity of God.
 Now why do you raise a hue and cry?
 Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love!

When a knower of divine Reality points to some of our weaknesses, a strong reaction is produced in our minds. Engulfed in our self-esteem we are unable to realize that for years we have been prey to those vices. Because of our ego and our ignorance, we try to prove as false what is a true analysis of our character and conduct. On the other hand, the few who take the remarks of the sage in the right spirit of humility with discrimination, in them the realization of their mistake is changed into remorse, which in turn is transformed into courage to renounce the path of error and to pursue the path of truth. In this way, such a person comes into light from darkness.

Saints and mystics are like the surgeons, who perform a surgical operation on a patient's carbuncle to

remove its pus, to cure him. The saints and Masters perform such an operation on the carbuncle of ignorance and ego formed on the minds of people. Those who are able to bear the pain of the operation, they get rid of the filth and dirt from the wound. After the operation, the saints apply the balm of God's love on the wound, and bring about a permanent cure of the patient.

Bulleh Shah says that Sufi saints and spiritual Masters reveal the secrets of the highest spiritual regions in their writings: "They reveal the secrets of the Fourth Realm." The fragrance of Reality emanates from them, but the ignorant ones do not realize their high spiritual attainments. They, in fact, become their mortal enemies: "If one speaks the truth, They come to fight." One main sign of an ignoramus is that he considers an enlightened person as an ignoramus. Under these circumstances, Bulleh Shah counsels that it is wise to keep silent before such people, even though hearts of lovers of God blossom with delight, when they hear the divine secrets that the mystics reveal:

Pass your time by keeping silent !

When they hear the truth, people cannot bear it.

If truth is spoken, they get on to your neck;

And they do not sit by the side of the truthful.

Truth is sweet only to the dear lover.

Truth is destructive of rituals and ceremonies.

Truth brings joy to the home of the lover.

Truth gives a new direction, it creates a new colony,

After it has vanquished rituals and customs.

Silence cannot restrain a lover from giving out truth;

It comes out from within him like a waft of fragrance;

It is like the auspicious cord plaited for conjugal bliss.¹

Leave this world alone, all false and illusive.

Bullah Shah now utters the naked truth.

He now reveals the essence of *Shara*² and *Tariqat*.³

He opens out the truth about the Fourth Realm,⁴

After it has vanquished rituals and customs.

Pass your time by keeping silent!

In one of his *kafis*, Bulleh Shah has given the relative value of the various aspects of religion. In it he traces the origin of the ritualistic aspect, and thereby finds only a historical and psychological reason for its existence. He means to say that every human being is born in some religious group, and as a consequence inherits its customary and ritualistic tradition. The ritualistic aspect thus serves as a kind of midwife, which should give birth to the ethical aspect in the course of development. The ethical aspect, in turn, should produce the metaphysical aspect. Lastly, the metaphysical stage should end in the attainment of mystical experience, as the final destination. The one who gets a fixation at the ritualistic aspect is bogged down at the least important or the most superficial stage. In fact, spirituality does not take birth in an individual's life, if he remains confined to the customary or the ritualistic level. The offspring of spirituality was to be born from the womb of ritualism, but the process remains abortive. The normal growth should have been from the customary stage to reflective morality. This, in turn,

1. A bride plaits her hair like a cord and adorns it with ornaments to denote the auspicious state of wifehood.

2. Ritualistic aspect of religion.

3. The ethical aspect of religion.

4. reality.

should have developed into metaphysical wisdom or theoretical knowledge of ultimate Truth. In the end, the theory should have been put into practice, resulting in mystical experience. This is what is meant by the following lines of Bulleh Shah:

Remember that *Shariyat*¹ is our midwife;
And, *Tāriqat*² is like our mother;
Then comes the part played by *Haqiqat*.³
But the real reward comes from *Marfat*.⁴

How man abdicates his reason, and is enslaved in the web of superstition, is graphically brought out by Bulleh Shah in the following *kafi*:

People have drowned the truth in din.
Brahmins produce fear in the minds of their hosts,
That their ancestors in the other world are in trouble.
The impending calamity, they say, could be stopped
by charity.
So the Brahmins demand sugar, rice and clothes,
And supplement it with utensils, money and cattle.
Thus, they wean the simple folk away from God's
love,
And make them worship forebears and statues,
Which themselves they carved, nor feel any shame.
If perchance one gets indisposed or is taken ill,
They prescribe charms, spells and incantations.
If one happens to suffer from a disease of the eyes,
He is made to spend lavish amounts on alms,
Or he is made to vow to undertake a pilgrimage.

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1. Ritualistic aspect of religion ; literally, the law.
 2. The ethical aspect of religion ; literally, the path, the way.
 3. The metaphysical aspect of religion, literally, the essence, the truth.
 4. The mystical aspect of religion, literally, knowledge.

The opium-addict says he is in dire need of popy;
 And the poor seeker is in search of the benign Lord.
 No physician of the soul is there to cure it of its ills.
 And people in delusion wander in utter darkness.

.
 Through the Royal Vein the Lord is not far;
 People have for nothing raised an uproar!

The above attack against external observances is specifically directed against the ritualistic priests of various religions, who delude innocent people for their selfish ends. In the name of religion they wean people away from true spirituality. Every established and organized religion produces such priests, who acquire vested interests in keeping people confounded in worthless beliefs and maintaining their hold by the stratagem of various kinds of superstitions. And, it is mainly because of them, that internecine feuds in the name of religion occur. They also excite and instigate people to rise against saints and mystics, and most of the world's great spiritual teachers suffered grievously at their hands. Guru Nanak was called "The one who had gone astray." Prophet Mohammed, Jesus Christ, Socrates, Guru Arjun, Namdev, Kabir, Dadu and Paltu were all labelled "enemies of peity and righteousness." All of them were subjected to indignity and persecuted by their compatriots. What can be more ironical than the fact that the true followers of religion and true well-wishers of mankind should be maligned and victimized in the name of religion and humanity?

It was in such a mood of aversion to the hypocritical ways of priests that Bullah blurted out in one of his couplets:

In shrines dwell robbers,
 in idol-houses, thugs.
 In mosques live vagabonds,
 the lovers of God remain aloof.

In one of his *kafis* his tirade against priests is equally stringent:

Mullahs and *qazis* show me the way,
 Through the labyrinth of the rituals of religion.
 They are thugs, they are the hunters of sparrows.
 They have cast their net on all four sides.
 They teach me the so-called ways of piety,
 Which serve as fetters round my feet.
 Love does not care for caste or creed;
 Love is the eternal foe of orthodox canon.

About the futility of visiting religious places without purity of heart, Bullah writes:

People advise Bullah, 'Go and sit in the mosque.'
 He asks, 'What happens by going to the mosque,
 If the prayer does not come from the heart?
 What use are external washings of the person,
 If the filth in the heart is not removed?'

The purport behind every kind of religious activity is to attain union with the Lord. Bulleh Shah hints in the following *kafi*, that after this consummation has been achieved, all ritualistic activity becomes unnecessary:

My fasts, my pilgrimages, my prayers, O mother,
 My Beloved has made me forget them all!
 As soon as I realized the Beloved,
 My logic, my grammar were all forgotten:
 Such was the unstruck melody that He played!

When my Beloved came to my home,
 I forgot all expositions, all erudition!
 His splendor is visible within and without;
 And the deluded people know it not!

In his *kafi* "Mother, my mad love does not leave me, after I have lost my heart to the Beloved," the relationship between love and law has been beautifully explained by Bulleh Shah. Expressions such as "I sleep with my Beloved, pressed against His breast," "After I have entered the Unity," "I am now in union with the Beloved," and "My head and body are joined to His" point to Bulleh Shah's total absorption in the Lord. Girls play with dolls only before their marriage. After they get married, not only dolls and other childish games, but also their parents are forgotten. Bulleh Shah says that people taunt him by calling him an infidel and by saying that the Devil has taken abode in him. From his own point of view, says Bullah, he has lost the distinction between the believer and the non-believer after having been united with the Lord. In this sublime state of union, not only rituals and ceremonies appear as child's play, but the fear of public opinion also loses all importance—(I have burnt my bodice and veil. . .lost all sense of shame and reproach). The *kafi* runs as follows:

Mother, my mad love does not leave me,
 after I have lost my heart to the Beloved
 There was a wager between love and law,
 and I played the bet with all my skill.
 People reproach me time and again,
 but I do not care to listen.
 'In the courtyard the devil dances,¹
 beware of it and keep it in leash.'

1. People taunt me by saying that within me resides the Devil. They consider me as an infidel.

Breaking the law I won the game,
 and I walk disgraced in people's eyes.
 I was immature; in child's play I was lost;
 I was playing with toys of clay.
 These games now appear to be stupid,
 after I have come to the house of my Lord.
 I clap my hands, dancing a jig with my friends,
 and the Beloved peeps stealthily.
 Say, why does He feel shy? Why does He not
 disclose His secret?
 People call me an infidel, a disbeliever,
 and they pronounce it from house-tops.
 I see neither the infidel, nor the believer,
 after I have entered the Unity.
 I have burnt my bodice and my veil,
 and set on fire my hut, igniting unbelief.
 Placing my head on my palm, to my unbelief
 I am beholden.
 I am most fortunate to have killed my false husband,¹
 making him drink nectar² with my own hands.
 I am now in union with my Beloved,
 having lost all sense of shame and reproach.
 In the garden have I laid my bed,
 and sleep with Him, pressed against His breast.
 My head and body are joined to His, O Bullah,
 and the Beloved is firmly secured.
 Mother, my love does not leave me,
 after I have lost my heart to the Beloved.

Ritualism may be compared to the frame of a picture. The frame along with its cardboard back and the front glass is meant for the protection of the picture.

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1. Mind, the agent of the Negative Power, which holds the soul under its way.
 2. The nectar of the Name of God which redeems the soul, proves fatal for the evil tendencies of the mind.

The frame is not the picture itself. The box for jewelry cannot take the place of jewelry. The value of ritualism is derived from spirituality. Ritualism devoid of spirituality is like an empty box. The value of jewelry does not decrease, if it is contained in an ordinary box, or even if it is without a box. On the other hand, of what use is a box with a velvet cover, if it is filled with worthless shells? Where ritualistic practices are devoid of love of God and the Master and practice of the Word, there the best of rituals are futile. When the mind is pure, and love for the Master and the Word abides in the heart, then a specific etiquette or decency of manner is not indispensable. Bulleh Shah conveys this in his inimitable style as follows:

O Bullah, beyond all physical steps,
 behold the glory of Truth,
 Whoever has reached there,
 may forget to pay his respects.

In yet another *kafi*, he deals with his favorite theme of the relationship between love and ritualistic law thus:

O friends, it is now that I learn,
 How love and law are related.

By drinking a cup of love,
 All things are forgotten!
 In every house abides the Lord!
 I see Him pervading one and all.
 Within us abides our *Murshid*.
 When I fell in love, I learnt this.
 My logic, my grammar, my fund of polemics,
 All the knowledge I had learnt, proved futile.
 What has he to do with prayers, with fasts,
 Who has been intoxicated with the wine of love?

The erudition of the pundits and the mullahs
was useless.

None of them came to know the secret!
How would he know the worth of brocades and silks,
Who has spun only a coarse cloth?
Bullah, by sitting in the presence of the Beloved,
Has become mute and dumb!¹

O friends, it is now that I learn
How love and law are related.

CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this book not only to present Bulleh Shah's spiritual philosophy, but also to compare it with that of other saints and mystics. We have seen that at the basis of all true religions there is a common, universal core of mystic experience. No doubt, certain differences are perceptible in the expositions of these religious doctrines, but all these differences are superficial. They are mostly concerned with the rituals and external observances practiced by different creeds. They emanate from their socio-moral ethos, as also from their historical backgrounds and geographical environment. The differences of expression also flow from differences of various languages and their respective idioms. If one were to probe deeper into their underlying meaning, it would not be difficult to discern a common spiritual substratum, from which emerge all the different religious philosophies.

1. By attaining union with God, the tongue becomes speechless. This state has often been described by saints and mystics as of one who is mute and dumb.

One or two examples will make this fundamental point quite easy to comprehend. An electricity-generating station produces electric power which is used in various ways and in countless homes and institutions. We use it for producing light through bulbs and tubes; we use it to produce breeze through fans; we use it to listen to radio programs and to watch T.V. shows; and we use it for cooking and heating. The form and the level of each of these uses is different, but the underlying power is the same. So also, it is the same spiritual power operating in the whole world. Not only that, it is the same power that is active in the Lord, the Master and the soul; although the level at which it operates is different in all the three cases. To take another example, the water in a drop, in a wave and in an ocean is the same, although it appears in different forms. Similarly, the reality of the Lord, the Master and the soul is the same. It is for this reason that a drop (the soul), blending with a wave (the Master) can merge in an ocean (the Lord).

The Master is like an engineer who connects with a machine a part which has got detached from it. He connects the separated soul to its source, the Lord. He uses the means of the Word to bring about this connection. The entire creation emanates from the Word. But while the creation is perishable, the Word is everlasting. Once the connection between the soul and the Word has been made, a man is able to live in this world like a lotus flower, which lives in water and yet remains dry. One who has been able to attach himself to the Word within during his lifetime, is a man in the world, yet not of it. Also, he is freed from all delusion, and lives in a state of bliss.

How does one attain this bliss? How is he able to attach himself to the Word? This is achieved through learning to die while still living. In other words, he learns to withdraw his soul current from the extremities through the main body to the eye center, behind the two eyes. The technique for doing this is imparted by the Master, who is an adept in traversing this path.

Last, but not least, it has ever to be kept in mind that the human birth is the only opportunity, in which deliverance from suffering, deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, can be achieved. The entire creation is like a huge prison-house—a prison-house with eighty-four lakhs of cells—with only one cell that has an outlet. Once an individual misses the chance to get salvation from transmigration and suffering, the next chance might come after millions of years. The human birth is the last rung of the ladder, which takes one to the top, the final destination. A slip from the last rung will have the tragic consequence of throwing the climber to the bottom of the ladder. That is why, “even gods and goddesses pine for the human form.” Bulleh Shah, therefore, warns us with all emphasis at his command, not to let go this rare opportunity in frivolous pursuits, and to avail of it for the purpose for which we have been sent to the world:

On what have you spread your feet?

It will last but for a fleeting moment.

This fair endures for the winking of an eye.

Accomplish something, for your time is short.

Take this day, this minute, as a rare opportunity,

On what have you spread your feet?

Your sojourn in this caravan-serai is for a night.
 Do not get puffed-up in your brief stay here.
 Tomorrow the clarion-call will ask you to leave.
 On what have you spread your feet?

You have come from that royal place.
 O, why have you made this your permanent home?
 Now leave this assembly, what concern have you with it?
 On what have you spread your feet?

O Bulleh Shah, you harbor under a delusion,
 That you carry a huge mountain on your head.
 To that destination no road, no obstacle stops you.

On what have you spread your feet?

It would be well to recapitulate the basic points dealt at length in the main body of this book. A glance through them would make it clear that the essential message given by all saints is the same. They have all emphatically asserted that God abides within man, and it is there that he can be realized. Other points that come in its wake are:

1. God is to be found within, but all search for Him in temples and mosques, churches and synagogues in the form of rituals and customs, which take man away from his goal rather than to his destination, is futile.

2. Spiritual realization is attained through withdrawing the soul current from the extremities through the main body to the eye center behind the two eyes. Here contact with the Word is established, and from here the real spiritual journey commences.

3. The Word is the Creative Power, which is experienced by man in the form of celestial sound and light.

4. The method or technique of experiencing the Word is imparted by a Master, who is an adept on the path, and has himself traversed the spiritual realms.

5. Human birth is the only opportunity granted to man to attain union with the Lord. This opportunity normally comes to him after going through the "Wheel of the Eighty-four," that is, after passing through eighty-four lakhs of species. It is therefore, incumbent upon man to avail of this rare gift of the human birth to attain release from the cycle of birth and death, and to attain the state of eternal bliss in union with the Lord.

SECTION
THREE

POEMS

Kafi

Baran Maha

The Week

The Knots

Couplets and Excerpts

Acrostic

Kafi

NOTE ON KAFI

Kafi is a form of poetry in which the first or the second line—at times both lines together—serve as the refrain. *Kafi* is often chanted like a song. At the end of a stanza the singers sing the refrain repeatedly with force and gusto. This helps to build a particular mood or atmosphere, and creates a forceful effect on the audience. The *kafi* is generally sung by *qawwals*, a group of singers. They get so deeply absorbed in the singing that they become a part of the chorus. The word *kafi* is derived from the Arabic “*kafa*” which means a group. Thus participation by the whole group has become an almost integral part of *kafi* singing.

In printing the *kafis* in this book the refrain and each stanza of a *kafi* have been distinctly shown separate from one another. In certain *kafis* the refrain at the end of each stanza has been eliminated in full or in part, because pleasant in singing, the repetition appears monotonous in reading.

A SUBTLE DIFFERENCE

In this short *kafi* Bullah has touched upon one of his favorite subjects. The Lord pervades everywhere. To the discerning eye, He is reflected in His whole creation. To the laity there is vast difference between God and man, but to the spiritually enlightened, every man has the potentiality of rising to the level of the Lord. To Sassi He came in the form of Punnun, and for Bullah He appeared as Inayat Shah, his Master.

Ik nukta yar parhaya ei

My Friend has taught me one adage.

*Ain*¹ and *Ghain*² have the same form.
One single dot has created this tumult.
To rob Sassi of her heart,
He has assumed the form of Punnun.
O Bullah, the Lord has no caste,
I have found Him as Shah Inayat,

My Friend has taught me this adage.

*Faqir Mohd. Kulliyat, *p.19, poem 10*

1, 2. In Arabic/Persian/Urdu script they are written as *ʿ* and *ġ* with the difference only of a dot on the latter. The former stands for God and the latter for the Master.

* The full name of the book is *Kulliyat-i-Bulleh Shah*.

A WARNING

Human life is an opportunity given by the Lord to man to realize Him. But, man in his folly whiles away this rare opportunity in running after sense pleasures. This poem is in the form of a warning to man of the impending disaster. The poet exhorts man to find out the true purpose of human existence, and then impresses upon him the desirability to achieve this goal—"Do your repetition and don't be so stupid! . . . Do not be so foolish, come by some wisdom . . . Leave alone the tale of this world. This is the time for union with the Lord."

In the last stanza Bulleh Shah holds God responsible for all the ills the world suffers from. For if He had not created this world, there would have been no problems—"O Bullah, God Himself created this world, and then arose all troubles and distress. Quarrels in homes and strifes among parents, disasters, and calamities befell all men."

Main puchhan shauh dian vatan ni

I ask about the path leading to the Lord.
Let someone come and tell it to me.

I remained unmindful and repeated not His Name.
In my carelessness the Beloved remained hidden.
You have to make manifest who abides within you,
But you have a liking for sensual pleasures.
I ask about the path leading to the Lord.

O, do your repetition and don't be so stupid!
Or else you will be called the top renegade.
Perverse are the ways of the city of love!

Within it blaze its all-consuming flames !
I ask about the path leading to the Lord.

Do not be so foolish, come by some wisdom.
Fill your heart with the light of love.
Leave alone the tale of this world.
This is the time for union with the Lord !
I ask about the path leading to the Lord.

O Bullah, God himself created this world,
And then arose all troubles and distress.
Quarrels in homes and strifes among parents,
Disasters and calamities befell all men.

I ask about the path leading to the Lord.
Let someone come and tell it to me.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 287-288, poem 133

ARISE! AWAKE!

This *kafi* is in the nature of a warning. Human life is specifically meant for God-realization. Its duration is short, and it should not be wasted in frivolous activities. The fact of death should always be kept in mind. Bulleh Shah calls death the wedding-day.

Bulleh Shah has sometimes employed the analogy of wedding as death, in diametrically opposite ways. For a proper understanding of this analogy, it has to be remembered that death can be an occasion both for pain and joy. For the foolish worldly man who wastes away the precious gift of human life, death is a source for untold misery, but for the one who employs it for spiritual realization, it serves as an occasion for rejoicing.

An Indian bride has hardly any role to play in the choice of her spouse. She seldom gets the partner with whom she could be happy, and is often a victim of hostility in the house of her father-in-law. Similarly, the worldly-minded person who has made no spiritual progress during his life, suffers pain and misery at the time of death. His soul is forcibly withdrawn from his body by the cruel angels of death, causing him much torture. And, instead of meeting the Lord, the real Spouse, the soul is taken to the Lord of Death, the Lord of Justice (Dharamraj). He is also known as the Negative Power which punishes or rewards the individual according to his deeds. Such a 'wedding' would be worse than an abduction by a tyrant.

On the contrary, the bride who has accumulated the wealth of the Name of God as her dowry during her life, would find death to be a blissful experience. The Master

of such a soul would take charge of her, and would take her to higher spiritual regions for an ultimate union with the Lord. She would be released forever from the painful wheel of the eighty-four. For such a one death would prove to be a boon and a blessing, a true wedding indeed.

Human life provides the only outlet from the ever-recurring cycle of birth and death. Once the aspirant misses the chance, he has to go through once again the arduous wheel of eighty-four. Not only should one lead a pure and normal life, but one must also acquire the ability through assiduous spiritual practice to withdraw the soul current from the body to the eye-center. Bulleh Shah symbolically calls it spinning yarn from the spinning wheel. Various saints have called it 'dying while living'. Unless one learns to achieve this voluntary death, one cannot form contact with the Word, which eventually leads him to attain union with the Lord.

One who fails to avail of this opportunity, has a bleak prospect in front of him. He will depart from this world without a friend and without having made any preparation for the arduous journey ahead. Such has been the fate of the so-called great kings and conquerors, who strutted with great aplomb for a short while in this world, but had to leave helpless and empty-handed. Likewise, the great beauties before whom the mighty ones of this world knelt with humility, became food for worms in graves. In brief, all is transient in this world.

At the end of the poem Bulleh Shah states that even scholarship and erudition are of no avail for spiritual realization. What will take us to our goal of divine union is practice of the Word.

Utth jag ghurare mar nahin

Arise! Awake! Do not snore!
This slumber of yours is most inopportune.

One day you will have to leave this world;
You will then find your abode in the grave;
Your flesh will be eaten up by the worms;
Keep this in mind, forget not your death.
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Your wedding day¹ is approaching fast;
Have you dyed your clothes for your dowry?²
Why have you let yourself go to waste?
O you ignorant, you have no value for life!
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

You have frittered away your life in sleep.
Your auspicious moment has now come.
You have spun no thread on the wheel.³
What will you do, your dowry is not yet ready?
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

The day you were intoxicated with your beauty,
You were lost in the company of your mates.
In ignorance you wasted time in futile chatter,
You were totally unaware of the truth.
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Right from the beginning you were inept;
You were most shameless of the shameless.
As a glutton you filled your stomach to surfeit;
Till now you didn't avail your turn for release.
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

-
1. For a mystic, death is a wedding, for it leads to union with the Beloved.
 2. (Have you) Spiritually prepared yourself for the wedding.
 3. The spinning wheel is the symbol for the human body, and spinning yarn from it signifies spiritual practice or the process of withdrawing the soul current from the body to the eye center.

Now is the time for your nuptial departure.
 Why do you sleep with such false confidence?
 You have got to meet strangers¹ there.
 This market² will not remain brisk tomorrow.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

You will have to depart from this world,
 You will not set your foot here again.
 You will lose your lovely form and figure.
 You will not live here forever.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Your destination lies far, far away;
 You shall pass through forest and vale.
 It is hazardous to reach there on foot;
 And you do not seem to be an apt rider.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

You shall depart friendless, all by yourself;
 You shall straggle in dense forests.
 Take your provisions with you from here;
 For there no one gives aught on loan.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

You will go to an empty, desolate house;
 You shall live there friendless, a lonesome life;
 None will give you solace in your isolation;
 No one can keep you company there.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Those who ruled their lands with great aplomb,
 Those in whose honor bands were played,
 They had to leave their throne and crown.
 None can ever trust this world.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

-
1. Strangers are persons at the Bridegroom's house ; they depict saints and other realized souls.
 2. This world.

Where is now Alexander the Great?
 Death does not spare even *pirs* and prophets.
 All have had to leave behind their vain pride;
 There is none everlasting here, O friend.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Where now is Yusuf, the moon of Kina'n?
 Gone is Zulaikha with all her charm.
 Death at last made her mortal.
 No longer are they adorned and ornate.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Where is now the throne of Solomon,
 On which he used to ride the winds?
 The lord of death swallowed it too.
 None can hope to live for ever.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Where are chieftains, masters and kings?
 All have had to vacate their mansions.
 None could make this world his home,
 Even the one with armies countless!
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

The select of flowers—jasmine and tulips,
 The lily, the hyacinth, the peerless cypress,
 The autumn winds have flattened them all.
 Even the ecstasy of the narcissus is transient.
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

As you sow, so shall you reap;
 Or in the end you shall come to grief;
 Like the wretched crane you shall shriek;
 For without the wings none can fly.¹
 Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

1. The poet seems to suggest that one must acquire those wings on which the soul can fly back to its eternal Home.

Your abode will then be such places,
Where live lions, wolves, evil spirits.
Your palaces and mansions will all be vacant,
How will you claim them as your own?
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

We are powerless in the fortress of learning;
He Himself brought us under His pen,
We were worthless without the Word,
And without the Word none can cross.
Arise! Awake! Do not snore!

Except the Lord none exists, O Bullah,
Neither in this world, nor in the next.
Take your steps with care and caution,
For you shall not come the second time.

Arise! Awake! Do not snore!
This slumber of yours is most inopportune.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 9-14, poem 6

AT THE WELL OF LIFE

In this beautiful analogy from village life in India, this world has been compared to a well, and the people of this world to the women who come to the well with their pitchers to fill them with water. Just as there is a continuous stream of women who come to the well, so also people come to this world and depart from here in an unending succession.

In another simile, the poet says that just as the decoration of a bride adorned with ornaments and jewelry is all futile, if her husband does not look at her, so also the worldly position and status of a man are quite useless, if the Lord does not accept him. Such persons, with all their wealth and power, lose the game of life, in the words of Bulleh Shah, because they fail to attain the real purpose of human existence, namely union with the Lord.

Pani bhar bhar gayyan sabbhe

They all filled their pitchers,
and departed turn by turn.

More have come, some have filled and are leaving;
Some are waiting with arms outstretched.
With garlands, necklaces round their necks,
Their arms tinkle with bracelets.
Earrings hanging from their ears,
Jhumars¹ falling on their foreheads,
Lend perfection to their vanity.

1. An ornament consisting of a number of chains forming a fringe, which is attached to the top-knot of a woman's head and falls on the forehead.

But the Husband does not turn to look back;
 Their proud ostentation is futile.
 They all filled their pitchers,
 and departed turn by turn.

With henna on hands, henna on feet,
 A plait of hair on her temples,
 Perfumes and scented oil on her person,
 betèl in the mouth, missi¹ on her teeth,
 Were the secret call to come,
 All her household chores would be forgotten!
 They all filled their pitchers,
 and departed turn by turn.

O Bullah, if you follow His footsteps,
 You'll discover the path.
 You asked for a win, you got utter defeat.
 Having lost the game of life,
 You have become deaf, dumb and mad.

They all filled their pitchers,
 and departed turn by turn.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 22

1. A powder that stains the gums red.

AUSPICIOUS DAY

It is one of the many love lyrics of Bulleh Shah based on the tale of Heer and Ranjha. He considers it the most auspicious of days, when his master, Inayat Shah, comes to his house. And just as the worth of Ranjha was known only to Heer, as the others took him to be only a cowherd, so also the true worth of Inayat Shah is known only to Bulleh Shah, whereas the laity considers him a mere *Arain*, a vegetable-grower. To be ignorant about his true nature is like trampling a crown under trash or letting it go to waste in rivers and jungles.

Ao sayyo ral dayo ni vadhai

Come, dear friends, felicitate me on my good fortune !
I have found my consort in beloved Ranjha !

Today is the dawn of an auspicious day;
Ranjha has stepped into my courtyard.
With a staff in hand and a blanket on shoulders,
He has taken on the form of a cowherd.
Come, dear friends.

The crown is trampled under hoofs of cows,¹
It is being wasted in jungles and pastures.
He appears to come from the place of the Lord,
No one cares to know the truth.
Come, dear friends.

Bulleh Shah has struck a bargain,
He has drunk a cupful of poison.
He did not think of gain or loss,
He carries overhead a bundle of sorrows.

Come, dear friends, felicitate me on my good fortune !
I have found my consort in beloved Ranjha !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp.30-31, poem 19

1. The poet suggests that the master is the crown of creation but none knows his real worth.

BEHIND THE SCREEN

The Lord pervades this world and in every living being; but this is in the latent form. He comes in the manifest form as a friend of man in the guise of a prophet or a master. And, it is through love that he gets united with His creatures.

The pantheistic strain which marks many of Bullah's poems, is quite prominent in this *kafi*. In the second stanza he says, "You yourself abide in one and all." Then why say, "I am different from you." The only difference is that He takes on an earthly form, when He comes as a master. The third and the fourth stanzas harp on the same theme.

The fifth stanza brings out the ecstasy of love, in which the one who has drunk from the cup of this wine cannot remain silent.

The last stanza deals with the price of love, which is like a fire where one has to get consumed—"O Bulleh Shah, make your body a furnace; burn your bones to dust in its fire." However, the reward that comes at the end is beyond all reckoning, for it is total bliss of union with the Lord—"Thus alone, can you behold the Creator!"

Kyon ohle baih baih jhaki da ?

Why do you sit behind the screen and peep?
From whom do You hide yourself?

You came as a friend to love yourself,
You have put over Your face the veil of *meem*.¹

1. The letter 'm' in Arabic. Here it signifies the illusion of duality.

From Ahad¹ You changed yourself into *Ahmad*.²
 And on your head waves the canopy of the cosmos.
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

You yourself abide in one and all.
 Then why say, "I am different from you."
 You have yourself come to have a look at You;
 Only You have kept the veil of earth between.
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

Who other than You at all exists?
 So why do You raise this futile quarrel?
 This is the height of high handedness—
 To talk of one to one's own self.
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

Somewhere You are a Roman, somewhere a Syrian.
 Somewhere You are a master, somewhere a slave.
 You yourself are every one of them.
 Then why do You test the good and the bad?
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

In whomsoever love raises its wayward head;
 The intoxicated one loses all sense of self.
 How can one ever remain silent.
 Who has drunk the cup from the Cup-bearer?³
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

Of your own You have hastened to me;
 How long can You now remain in hiding?
 You have come disguised as King Inayat,
 And now You steal glances at me!
 Why do You sit behind the screen and peep?

1. The One, God.

2. The prophet, the Master.

3. The Beloved, the Master.

O Bullah, make your body a furnace;
Burn your bones to ash in its blaze.
Turn it into a vessel of love;
Thus alone, can you behold the Creator !

Why do You sit behind the screen and peep ?
From whom do You hide yourself ?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp.206-208, poem 95

BEHIND THE VEIL

The subject of this *kafi* is that the Creator is to be found in every part of His creation, but He is seen only by the rare few who have the eyes to see Him. For the worldly man he is hidden, but for the man of spiritual vision He is manifest.

The pantheistic strain marks the entire *kafi*. He is present in the observer as well as the observed. He himself keeps himself concealed and He himself makes himself revealed.

He took the form of Laila and He took the form of Majnun to have a glimpse of His own effulgence. He was in Shams, Mansur and Zacharias and He came in the form of their executioner. It was through His decree that the world came into existence, and it was by His command that man was made in His image.

In the last stanza the target of the Lord is Bullah himself; but at the same time He has become manifest in Bullah. In fact Bullah and He have merged into one entity.

Parda kis ton rakhida?

From whom do You conceal yourself?
Wherefore do You peep through the veil?

You yourself, O Lord, manifested at first,
Now, You teach the lesson of saying prayers.
Now, You yourself have come to behold
the spectacle,
And, in the guise of Laila You give a glimpse.
From whom do You conceal yourself?

You got Shams of Tabriz flayed alive,
 Mansur of Hallaj, You put on gallows,
 You severed with a saw the head of Zacharias.
 What shall I say of the countless others?
 From whom do You conceal yourself?

You ordained, and it did happen;
 From the formless You became manifest,
 For yourself You created the whole wide world,
 With the umbrella of Cosmos over head.
 From whom do You conceal yourself?

Now, You have turned Your aim at me;
 You cannot remain hidden any more;
 You yourself get addressed as 'Bullah',
 With the earthly veil though between!

From whom do You conceal yourself?
 Wherefore do You peep through the veil?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 61-62, poem 36

BELOVED AS MAN

The first line of the poem says that God has come to this world in the form of a man. Bullah is obviously referring to his Master, Inayat Shah, in this opening line.

In the subsequent part of the poem the omnipresence of God is dilated upon. He abides in the deer, the prey, as well as the leopard that preys. He then comes as the hunter of both. He abides in the master as also in the slave. He then gets himself sold for a price.

Sometimes He takes the form of a king, riding elephants, and sometimes of the beggar with a begging bowl. He is to be found as much in a yogi as in one given to sense-pleasures. Various are the roles that He is pleased to play.

But, although He is present everywhere and in everyone, He is manifest only in the Master—"I dance to the tune of that researcher, who has made me realize the Beloved."

In the last stanza Bullah proclaims that his love for God is older than creation, because he and God were one before He created the world.

Dhola admi ban aya

The Beloved has come as man!

He himself is the deer, himself the leopard.

He himself then goes out to hunt them.

He himself is the master, himself the slave;

And himself He gets sold for a price.

The Beloved has come as man!

Sometimes He mounts an elephant.
 Sometimes He roams with a begging bowl.
 Sometimes as a prince, a yogi, a lover of pleasures,
 He acts in the play in every role.
 The Beloved has come as man!

What a trick the juggler has played!
 He has made me dance like a puppet.
 I dance to the tune of that researcher,¹
 Who has made me realize the Beloved.
 The Beloved has come as man!

Abel and Cain were begotten by Adam,
 But who begot Adam?
 Verily, Bullah came earlier than all;
 He dandled his grandfather in his lap.²

The Beloved has come as man!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 119-120, poem 60

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1. Researcher into the inner treasures, the *Murshid*.
 2. Bullah talks of his existence with God, before God had manifested himself. Thus, his grandfather came late as a progeny of Adam. This refers to the pre-manifestation period when the Sufi-saints were with God. Paltu, Dadu and a number of other saints have made similar statements. According to C.F. Usborne, the line means that the poet's grandfather is a babe in knowledge compared to him (Bulleh Shah by C.F. Usborne, p. 20).

BELOVED AS YOGI

Just as Ranjha assumed the form of a yogi and came to meet Heer at her in-laws' house, so also the Lord came in disguise as Inayat Shah to this world to redeem Bullah. Bullah felt the same attraction and charm for his Master, as Heer felt for Ranjha. And, even as Ranjha's love for Heer was no less strong than that of Heer for Ranjha, so also the love between Inayat Shah and Bullah was equally mutual and equally strong. Also, it symbolizes the same strong longing of the Lord for the separated soul as the soul feels for the Lord. In fact it is the Lord Himself who enkindles His love in the soul by appearing before her in the attractive form of the Master.

The last stanza brings out the fact that the love between Bullah and Inayat Shah could not be kept hidden for long, just as the mask of a yogi on Ranjha could not remain a secret, and his true identity was soon revealed.

Ranjha jogira ban aya

Ranjha has come in the form of a yogi.
Oh, what a mask he has worn!

This yogi has eyes like goblets,
Beaming their glances as of a hawk!¹
On beholding his face all cares vanish.
These eyes have lost a precious jewel.²
Ranjha has come in the form of a yogi.

1. He has searching looks. Ranjha comes in disguise as a yogi to search for Heer. The allusion is to God seeking the soul of man.

2. Heer.

What are the marks of this yogi?
 He wears rings in his ears and beads round his neck.
 His visage reflects the beauty of Yusuf.
 He has turned *Alif* into *Ahad*.¹
 Ranjha has come in the form of a yogi.

Ranjha is my yogi, I am his yogin;
 I shall serve him like a slave.
 In vain have I wasted my earlier life;
 Now he has come and charmed me!
 Ranjha has come in the form of a yogi.

To what a pass you've brought Bullah!
 The good old love has stirred up a storm;
 How can this now be kept a secret,
 That he has come from Takht Hazara?²

Ranjha has come in the form of a yogi;
 Oh, what a mask he has worn!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 121-122, poem 61

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1. Alludes to the transformation of the Absolute into God.
 2. The native place of Ranjha. This means that the Master has descended from the Lord's True Abode to the land of the soul, to guide it back to the Home Eternal.

BID ME FAREWELL!

In this lyric the Lord is depicted as the Bridegroom, and His abode as the Bridegroom's house. Bullah has brought out graphically the state of an inept bride on the eve of her marriage. She has failed to equip herself adequately in her parents' house, and is now in a state of intense anxiety at the thought of being confronted by her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law. In this analogy, Bullah depicts the state of one, who is about to leave this world, but who has made no spiritual preparation for the hereafter.

In the last stanza, Bullah invokes the grace of the Lord to show mercy on him and overlook his faults. For if He were to dispense justice, there would be no place for him.

Sada main sahaurian ghar janan

I have to go forever to the house of my in-laws.
O come and bid me farewell, my friends!
God-willing you too will have to go there;
O come and bid me farewell, my friends!

Thorns and briers, extremely sharp, cling to me.
I carry with me my future woes,
to whom shall I give my old ones?
One woe is my separation from my friends,
as is the *Koonj*¹ deserted by its flock.

One blouse and a single veil,
That is all my parents have given at my marriage.

1. A species of crane, well-known for flying together with others of its kind, thus giving the idea of comradeship in Oriental poetry.

When I see this dowry that they gave,
 copious tears flow from my eyes.
My mother-in-law and sisters-in-law will taunt me,
 making my life miserable.

O Bullah, I hear that the Lord is the Coverer of sins,
Let Him help me to pass over this crisis!
If He were to dispense justice, I have no hope.
Let him shower His mercy on me!

I have to go forever to the house of my in-laws;
O come and bid me farewell, my friends!
God-willing you too will have to go there!
O come and bid me farewell, my friends!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 147-148, poem 72

CALL ME YOUR OWN

This poem of love depicts intense longing of Bulleh Shah for union with the Lord.

The second stanza points out the main obstacle that comes in the way of such a union. This obstacle is the ego, the elimination of which is necessary to bring about the desired result.

The third stanza in its first two lines gives a warning about the impending death. Idling away precious time during the lifetime will result in regret by the world—“It will shed tears, when its eyes open.” The last two lines of the stanza stress that it is through love and its ecstasy that the goal of God-realization can be attained rather than through intellectual effort and scholarship.

The fourth stanza hints at the intense love disciples have for their Master, who is the physical form of the Lord in the world—“When the formless expressed himself in two eyes, millions of heads rolled on the ground for them.” They sacrificed their lives in a flood of joy for their Beloved—“Waves of delight rose in an awesome flood. O, You will make stream of blood surge from me!”

The fifth stanza brings out the intermingling of joy and sorrow in love. Although the lover has to go through much pain in the game of love, he is not prepared to forego this pain. In fact, the pain somehow is transformed into joy—“Is it witchcraft or a spell of magic, that You make the malady appear as bliss?”

The first two lines of the sixth stanza lay emphasis on the *practice* of meditation rather than mere thinking about the spiritual path. For, time lost in life will never come back. The last two lines express regret on the ways

of the world, which persecutes saints while they are alive, but worships them when they are dead—"When the head is sacrificed on the cross, Of what avail will it be to beat the drums?"

The seventh stanza in beautiful analogies brings out that love is quite distinct from any recognized creeds and religions of this world—"I have turned my body into roasted meat, fermented the water of my eyes into wine, "Made a rebeck out of my bones and nerves. How will You christen this creed, this religion?"

The ninth stanza refers to the ecstasy experienced in the mystic vision of the Lord. It is also a tribute that Bullah pays to his Master, who is called by him as the embodied form of the Lord—"Daily You come as Inayat to me. It is thus that You make yourself manifest."

The last stanza besides glorifying his Master has a special esoteric significance. The Lord is invisible except by rising above the two eyes to the third eye—"You have to transform these eyes of yours." But, before the Lord can be seen, one has to merge into the Master—"Then alone will you be able to behold Him, when you come back home as King Inayat."

Kadi apni akh bulaoge

Will You ever call me Yours?

I am worthless; what virtue do I have?

My body as also my mind belong to You,

You who are my very life,

Will You and I become one?

Will You ever call me Yours?

If I, the perishable, eliminate my ego,
 I shall manifest You who are everlasting.
 If I reveal the Truth in the manner of Mansur,
 I would be caught and put on the gallows.
 Will You ever call me Yours?

I am awake when the whole world is asleep.
 It will shed tears, when its eyes open.
 None has reached the goal except through ecstasy.
 Will You grant me eternal bliss?
 Will You ever call me Yours?

When the formless expressed himself in two eyes,
 Millions of heads rolled on the ground for them.
 Waves of delight rose in an awesome flood.
 O, You will make a stream of blood surge from me!
 Will You ever call me Yours?

No lover—in separation—ever enjoys sound sleep.
 I shall wash my face with tears of anguish.
 Is it witchcraft or a spell of magic,
 That You make this malady appear as bliss?
 Will You ever call me Yours?

Say, what secret of love will You dwell on?
 What will happen when the judgement is pronounced?
 When the head is sacrificed on the cross,
 Of what avail will it be to beat the drums?¹
 Will You ever call me Yours?

I have turned my body into roasted meat.
 I have fermented the water of my eyes into wine.
 I have made a rebeck out of my bones and nerves.
 How will You christen this creed, this religion?
 Will You ever call me Yours?

1. To beat drums of praise will be of little value.

What will You gain from strain and grouse?
 Take hold of that which pleases the heart.
 To whom do You give this world and the next?
 Pray, bestow on me the gift of Your sight.
 Will You ever call me Yours?

Your vision for a moment sets me on fire.
 A stream of tears flows from my eyes.
 Daily You come to me as Inayat.
 It is thus that You make yourself manifest.
 Will You ever call me Yours?

O Bullah, when you go to see the Lord,
 You have to transform these eyes of yours.
 Then alone will you behold Him,
 When you come back home as King Inayat.

Will You ever call me Yours?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 178-181, poem 85

CAUGHT IN A NET

The subject of this *kafi* deals with those difficulties, in which the disciple has been caught. The main ideas in this poem are as follows:

The burden of the hardships of love is heavier than the weight of mountains, but the lover does not hesitate to bear it, because he desires to have a glimpse of the Beloved. But the poor lover does not know whether his desire would be fulfilled. Moses had expressed his desire to see God face to face, but God had warned him that he would not have the strength to bear His effulgence. However, on the insistence of Moses to have His vision, God asked him to look first at the mountain (Mount Sinai) on which He put His light. And when God cast His glance on Sinai, it was immediately burnt, and Moses fainted out of fear.

Again, the lover insists that he would have direct relation with Him, although he knows that people with such a relationship never enjoy peace and sound sleep. The lover is not content with the revelation of God by others. He must experience for himself the vision.

In one of the stanzas Bullah refers to a difficulty which he has mentioned in some other *kafis* also. He says that God does not meet him despite the fact that He is near the royal vein¹ (*Shah Rag*) and abides in the 'very folds of his veil.'

He also says that in the state of intoxication with His love, a wave comes from his heart up to his mouth which impels him to disclose those secrets, which he is not permitted to disclose.

1. This is a mystic term for the subtle path from the eye center upward through which the soul passes on its ascent to higher regions.

The last stanza describes the stage in which the lover has lost his identity in the Beloved. He then sees the Beloved pervade everywhere and in everyone. He is perceived inside as well as outside.

Jind kurikki de munh ai

My life has been caught in a net!

You yourself are "flesh of my flesh",

You yourself are remote and aloof.

On hearing Your utterances

I have been robbed of my senses.

Leading me out of rituals to the non-conformist path,

You have thrown me into a strange mire.

My life has been caught in a net!

An atom of Your love weighs heavier than
a mountain.

Just for a moment of Your glimpse,

I carry the whole mountain on head.

When no return is received for labor,

What indeed can people do?

My life has been caught in a net!

Why raise a tumult? Let Him burn me as He would.

I go without a sheaf of comfort.

Surrounded by endless heaps of sorrow.

Whatever had to happen, happened that day;¹

What can be done now, O brother?

My life has been caught in a net!

He listens not to my advice,

He speaks not a word to me;

Shall I ask and find what He intends?

It's but a day before that,

1. The day of Creation.

I was mad for Him,
 He was mad for me.
 Why does He fear me now?
 From behind the screen He has thrown a hint,
 He has thus pierced, my heart.
 My life has been caught in a net!

With the arrow in my heart,
 With the noose round my neck,
 I endure my life in this manner.
 Repeatedly I bang my head on the ground,
 With tearful eyes, I remember my Love.
 Have others too fallen in love with You,
 Or I alone am guilty of this blunder?
 My life has been caught in a net!

The world is resplendent with Your Name,
 Why do You run away from Your lover?
 In the folds of the veil You live cheerfully,
 But Your secret, You do not reveal to me.
 You have caught hold of me from the middle,
 You have hung me upside down.
 My life has been caught in a net!

O Dweller of my heart, come Thee out,
 That I may hold Your arm to stand.
 Outwardly You hide yourself from me;
 Inwardly I am never far from You.
 Zulaikha too was pierced from within,
 I too cry from within with pain,
 My life has been caught in a net?

All I had to say, I said to Him;
 The Pretender feigned not to hear.
 I wring my hands, I smite my palms,
 I cry my eyes out.
 I was to get, had instead to give,
 Such indeed is Your 'benevolence'
 My life has been caught in a net!

Wave after wave rises thus,
 That I blurt out what is a secret.
 If I speak the truth, I get the noose;
 If I tell a lie, I may be spared.
 Why should I give out a delicate secret,
 Which uttered later becomes public first.
 My life has been caught in a net!

Revelation comes only to the pure;
 Pray, do become mine, of Your own.
 Wake with me when I wake;
 Sleep with me when I sleep.
 Whosoever fell in love with You,
 Did You ever give her peaceful sleep?
 My life has been caught in a net!

How people have persecuted me
 because of your love!
 How many homes have been ruined like this!
 You steal a peep on me from outside,
 Inwardly You revolve round me.
 You play the game of hide and seek,
 You play on me such clever tricks.
 Is this what You call Your game?
 My life has been caught in a net!

To settle dispute between You and me,
 The Qazi¹ has come from Rum.
 He satisfied himself from scriptures,
 That You and I are one.
 The Qazi has taken a fancy to me,
 I have set my heart on him.
 My life has been caught in a net!

1. Qazi from Rum means Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Rumi. Here Bullah seems to refer to his Master, Inayat Shah.

“Like whom are You, O Beloved?”

Bullah used to ask:

Now the question of You and I has been resolved.

When in my search I looked for You,

I myself was lost, and ceased to exist.

I found You within, I found You without,

Your light I saw in and out.

My life has been caught in a net!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 99-102 poem 52

CELESTIAL MELODY

This poem is reminiscent of the opening lines of Rumi's "*Masnavi*".

"Listen thou to the tale told by the flute,
It complains of its severance from its source."

The sound of the flute is associated with the music of a high spiritual stage. Its enchanting melody is a harbinger of the peerless music of the final stage.

The restive mind becomes motionless by the enrapturing melody of the flute—"Now I have entrapped the restive deer." Earlier, it was engaged in formal prayer without any signs of being tamed.

The last stanza depicts a state of perfect bliss—"O, the Spouse of Bullah, I now cry in ecstasy." It expresses sorrow for the plight of those who seek the Lord elsewhere—"Where do the seekers wander in quest of You?"

Murli baj uthhi ajghatan

The flute has suddenly burst forth into melody!
On hearing it I have forgotten all other things.

I am shot with the wondrous shafts of Unstruck,
Music;

And the world appears fake, false its pursuits.

O Master, I have come to bargain
for a sight of your face.

I have forgotten all other things.

The flute has suddenly burst forth into melody!

Now I have entrapped the restive deer.¹
 He it was who had tied me down.
 I have taught him the prayer of love;
 Only a verse or two remains to be taught.
 The flute has suddenly burst forth into melody!

O, the Spouse of Bullah, I now cry in ecstasy,
 When the Lord has played upon the flute.
 Driven crazy by its notes I run to you.
 Where do the seekers wander in quest of You?

The flute has suddenly burst forth into melody!
 On hearing it I have forgotten all other things.

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, p. 331, poem 101

1. The mind, which with its restless nature keeps man bound to earthly desires.

CHEATED WHILE SPINNING

This poem deals with the relative merits of love and meditation. The love of the disciple for the Master will lead him to his goal of God-realization quicker than not only religious rituals and customs, but even meditation—"I was cheated while spinning. What shall I do with the dowry and the ornaments, who has been beguiled by the cup of love?" This is so, because the disciple identifies himself with the Master, who is a realized soul. Meditation is arduous, and the result is slow in coming—"After spinning for years I produced a hank." The wiles of the negative power always pose a threat for achieving the goal—"The crow pounced upon it."

In the last stanza the author welcomes the arrival of death, for it leads to release from the prison-house of the body—"Thank God, my spinning wheel is broken, my life is released from torture," and culminates in union with the Lord.

Mian main katdi katdi muthhi

Good Sir, I was cheated while spinning!

What shall I do with the dowry and the ornaments,

Who has been beguiled by the cup of love?

O, capture that thief of mine,

Who has robbed me of my life.

Good Sir, I was cheated while spinning!

After spinning for years I produced a hank,

And the crow pounced upon it, O friend.

Behind my "pihri"¹ was left a wasted roll.

Good Sir, I was cheated while spinning!

1. A kind of low seat with a back like a chair, a kind of low seat without a back, a low stool.

Thank God, my spinning wheel is broken;
My life is released from torture.¹
O Bullah, the Spouse has made me dance,
And the tumult has risen all round!

Good Sir, I was cheated while spinning!

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, p 324, poem 99

1. The torture of arduous meditation, devoid of real love.

COME, DEAR FRIEND

This poem, suffused with the poignant pain of separation, seems to have been written when Bullah had been separated from his Master, Inayat Shah.

In the depressing mood that affects him, the poet finds the musical notes of the *koel* filled with sadness. And it brings to the surface his own pain of separation from his beloved Master.

The last stanza depicts the impatient waiting for the arrival of the beloved, who alone could extinguish the blaze of fire raging within the lover's heart.

Kadi a mil yar pyarya

Come sometime to meet me, my Beloved!
I am a sacrifice unto the path you tread.

The *koel* shrieks from the garden tree;
She ever chants doleful notes of anguish.
Why has the Beloved forsaken the wretched one?
Come sometime to meet me, my Beloved!

O Bullah, the Beloved will come to my house
sometime,
And quench the blazing fire within me.
I am a sacrifice unto the path He treads.

Come sometime to meet me, my Beloved!
I am a sacrifice unto the path you tread.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 182, poem 86

COME, FRIEND!

It is one of those rare *kafis*, which is in the form of a poem, dealing systematically with a single subject. The subject is: the devotee or the seeker has got separated from his Deity or Master. He is now lost in terrible wilderness, and calls the Lord to help him out of the predicament.

Thieves and robbers who surround the devotee denote passions and worldly desires that obstruct the path of his spiritual progress. The religious preachers enjoin upon him to practice a complicated set of rituals and thus lead him astray. Bullah calls them thugs, who cheat innocent people of their valuables.

At the end, Bullah concludes that it is through love of the Lord and help of the Master that the stormy ocean of this world can be crossed. The Master shows the Lord right within the seeker himself and not outside in mosques and temples.

A mil yara sar lai, meri jan dukhan ne gheri

Come, Friend, I crave Your help,
My life is wrapped in troubles!

In sleep, I got separated from You,
Waking, I have lost trace of You.
Isolated, I have been robbed, my Lord!
Thieves and dacoits have encircled me.

Mullahs and *qazis* mislead me
To the labyrinth of religious rituals.
They are thugs, they are the hunters of sparrows;
They cast their nets on all the sides.
They teach me the so-called ways of piety,
Which serve as fetters around my feet.

Love does not care for caste or creed;
Love is the foe of orthodox canon.
The land of the Beloved is across the river;
And the waves of avarice have engulfed me.
The Master is holding the boat; why do you tarry?
Why do you tarry, why this delay?

O Bullah, you will realize the Lord, for sure;
Boldly announce this to your heart.
The Beloved is right within you!
Whom do you search from outside?
Why get deluded in broad daylight?

Come, Friend, I crave Your help,
My life is wrapped in troubles.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 15

COME, LOVE!

One of Bulleh Shah's favorite subjects, love for God and His test of His lovers, forms the theme of this poem. He states that one has to work hard to attain union with the Lord. Not words—what he calls 'sleeping' or 'sitting'—but sustained spiritual practice—what he calls 'waking'—will lead to merger in the Lord.

He then gives a number of examples of the great lovers who had to pay a heavy price for their love. Shams of Tabriz who had identified himself with the Lord, was hanged upside down.¹ Yusuf was thrown into the well. Zulaikha was disgraced in the bazaars of Egypt. Moses was struck dumb while Mount Sinai was reduced to ashes. Heer was consumed within herself in separation from Ranjha. Bullah then poses a question to the Lord, "If You and I are not separate, why do You hide yourself?"

In the last stanza Bullah, as usual, strikes a happy note. He proclaims that ever since he found his Master, Inayat Shah, the Lord had taken abode in him.

A sajan gal lagg asade, kiha jhera layoi?

Come Love, fold me in Your arms, why this quarrel?

Sleeping or sitting I saw nothing,

Only while waking I found Him.

"Rise as I command,"² said Shams;

And he was hanged upside down.

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1. It is generally believed that he was flayed alive, so it is possible that he was hung upside down while being flayed alive.
 2. The reference is to an incident, in which a dead body came back to life by the command of Shams-i-Tabriz. Earlier, it did not rise with the command given by him in the name of God.

I am defamed by the world as Your lover;
 You alone have given me solace;
 I am not separate from You,
 Why hide yourself from me?

The buffaloes have come,
 The Beloved has not;
 The fire of separation has consumed me.

Have You seen the doings of love?
 Yusuf was thrown into the well.
 In the manner of Zulaikha,
 In the bazaars of Egypt,
 I have been brought to disgrace by You.
 Come Love, fold me in Your arms, why this quarrel?

“Give me a glimpse of Your effulgence”, said Moses;
 And the mountain was reduced to ashes.
 “You cannot see me” was Your own command,
 That You gave to rebuke him.

My crazy love has all but finished me;
 It has made my heart an orphan.
 Says, Bullah, “Ever since I found Shah Inayat,
 The Lord has taken abode in me.”

Come Love, fold me in Your arms, why this quarrel?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 16-17, poem 8

COME, O PHYSICIAN!

This is probably the best known and the most popular of Bulleh Shah's *kafis*.¹ There is a story associated with this *kafi*, which may be briefly narrated as follows:

Once Bulleh Shah's Master, Inayat Shah, got annoyed with him. When he failed to pacify the Master by all other means, he put on the garb of a woman dancer and began to dance. As Inayat Shah passed that way, he stopped for a while to see the dance. When he recognized Bullah, he had a hearty laugh and his resentment vanished. In the last stanza of the *kafi* there is hint of this incident.

There are five stanzas of this *kafi*. The first four stanzas depict four different pictures of the pain of separation and distance from the Beloved. The fifth stanza does not paint any imaginary picture but deals with an actual event, about which mention has been made above.

Tere ishq nachayian

Your love has made me dance to a fast beat!

Your love has taken abode within my heart!

This cup of poison I drank all by myself.

Come, come, O physician, or else I breathe my last!

Your love has made me dance to a fast beat!

1. Nazir Ahmad, *Kalam-i-Bulleh shah*, p. 112.

The sun has set, the reddish tinge of dusk lingers;¹
 I shall be a sacrifice to you,
 If your face again appears before me.
 Forgive me, that I did not go with thee.
 Your love has made me dance to a fast beat!

Do not drive me away from this love, O mother.
 Who will bring back the boat adrift in stormy waters?
 My sense has left me and gone with the ferry-man.
 Your love has made me dance to a fast beat!

In this forest of love the peacock gives a call.
 My lovely friend is both my *qibla*² and *Ka'ba*
 Having inflicted the grievous wound,
 You never enquired after me.
 Your love has made me dance to a fast beat!

O Bullah, the Lord has brought me
 to the door of Inayat³,
 Who has given me garments green and red, to wear⁴.
 When I danced a step, I found him the same as ever.

Your love has made me dance to a fast beat!

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, pp. 26-27

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1. The sun signifies the Master of Bullah, Inayat Shah. Thus, setting of the sun means the departure or absence of his Master.
 2. The altar of the *Ka'ba* in Mecca.
 3. Inayat Shah, the Master of Bulleh Shah.
 4. The bright colors signify the dress of a bride. Here these are indicative of the spiritual bliss Bullah has obtained through the grace of his Master.

CONSUMED BY LOVE

Bullah generally uses the classical example of Heer and Ranjha to illustrate the love of the disciple for his Master. In this lyric, however, he employs the tale of Sohni and Mahinwal to illustrate his love. The turbulent waters of river Chenab could not deter Sohni from crossing the river to meet her beloved Mahinwal. She tried to cross the river on an unbaked pitcher, and she was drowned while crossing it. So also, no obstacle can stop a devotee from trying to reach his Master, howsoever formidable the obstacles might be in his way. And, just as Sohni did not know how to swim, but nevertheless took the fatal plunge, similarly the true lover, despite being a novice in the art of facing obstacles, will not show any hesitation in jumping into a formidable danger.

In the last stanza Bullah imagines himself as an attractive bride, who could captivate the heart of her spouse, if he were to come to her house.

Tangh mahi di jalian

I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved;
I set crows to flight¹ and ever stand waiting for him.

I have no hard cash on me, I am penniless;
Still I am eager to get across the waters.
I have no acquaintance with the boatmen;
I pick up a quarrel with them foolishly.
I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved.

1. A Punjabi proverb meaning 'waiting anxiously'.

The banks of the river Chenab are full of din;
 Its stormy waters forming eddies swirl in fury;
 Most skillful of swimmers have drowned in it;
 If I raise a noise, I am dubbed as crazy.
 I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved.

The water of river Chenab has deep foundations;
 Swimmers have always floundered in it.
 Herdsmen and shepherds have gone across;
 I am the lone one left behind.
 I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved.

The waves of river Chenab can carry one across;
 I stand waiting for the beloved to come riding them.
 I have fallen headlong in love with him;
 If I weep loudly, I become a laughing-stock.
 I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved.

Across the Chenab lie jungles and forests,
 Where live blood-thirsty wolves and lions.
 O God, unite me soon with my beloved;
 This worry is preying upon my life.
 I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved.

At midnight the stars have begun to wane;
 Some have waned, some have reached the horizon.
 I have risen from my bed, and come to the river;
 Now I wait to be ferried across.
 I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved.

I am not a swimmer, what do I know of swimming?
 There is neither bamboo nor oar,
 and the boat is worn out.
 In the dreadful vortex I can find no foothold.
 I weep bitterly and wring my hands in despair.
 I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved.

O Bullah, if the Lord were to come to my house,
I would love to adorn myself with jewels.

Come beloved, with a *mukat*¹ over your head,
*tilak*² on your forehead.

If you were to look at me, only then I am pleasing!

I am consumed by the longing for my Beloved.

I set crows to flight and ever stand waiting for him.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp 72-74, poem 42

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1. A crown with a frill attached to it to cover the face. It is worn by the bridegroom at the time of his marriage.
 2. A ceremonial mark.

CREATOR AND CREATION

This short poem is in praise of God. It contains certain esoteric symbols, which are frequently repeated in the writings of Bulleh Shah. In brief, the poem conveys that God alone is real, and as Creator He is reflected in His creation. And this realization, says Bullah, comes only to a man with a pure heart.

Alif Allah nal ratta dil mera

With 'A',¹ my heart is steeped in love for the Lord;
I have no knowledge whatsoever of 'B'.²

The study of 'B' gives me no understanding;
I have relished only the bliss of 'A'.
I knew not the distinction between *Ain*³ and *Ghain*,⁴
This boon was showered on me by 'A'.
O Bullah, their utterances of 'A' are perfect,
Whose hearts have been cleansed of dross.

With 'A', my heart is steeped in love for the Lord;
I have no knowledge whatsoever of 'B'.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p.1, poem 1

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1. Originally, *Alif* (ا) the first letter of the Arabic/Persian/Urdu alphabet. It stands for unity, the One, the Lord.
 2. Originally, *Be* (ب) the second letter of the alphabet. It stands for all that is other than God.
 3. & 4. The letters *Ain* (ع) and *Ghain* (غ) have the difference only of a dot. Esoterically, it means that God is reflected in the master, elsewhere Bullah writes : "As is the form of *Ain*, so is the form of *Ghain*."

DEEP COLOR!

The Master reflects the Lord. Therefore, the color in which the Master dyes his disciple signifies the divine touch that the Master gives. In this *kafi* the disciple proclaims that he has taken on a deep color through his contact with his Master.

This lyric is replete with difficulties for the reader. For one thing, it does not point towards any one direction. Like a *ghazal*, everyone of its verses is independent. For another, almost every verse contains within it imaginary pictures whose relation with one another is quite obscure. For instance, in the second verse the expressions “pearls of meanings” and “veil from your eyes” are apparently unrelated. One conjecture is that “pearls of meanings” refers to the wise sayings of the Master, whereas “Lift up the veil from your eyes” signifies manifestation of identity of the Master with the Lord.

The expression “becoming dumb, deaf and blind” esoterically points to closing all the sense outlets to help the disciple withdraw his soul current from his body to his eye center. This enables him to “die before his death” as is mentioned in the next verse. Such a death is the real significance of resurrection, referred to in the Bible. Such a death is not only voluntary, but also leads to abiding life.

The last but one verse brings out the omnipresent nature of God, who pervades everywhere and in everyone.

In the last verse there seems to be a reference to the occasion when Bullah obtained forgiveness from his Master by dancing before him in the garb of a woman dancer.

Jo rang rangya guhra rangya

Whatever color I am dyed in, the dye is of deep color;
It has the glow of my Master, O friend.

Fame of the pearls of meanings¹ has become
widespread.

Lift up the veil² from your eyes, O friend.

Of the Sura Yasin of Muzammal,

Listen to the thunder of clouds,³ O friend.

In your black tresses let there be a shining hand.⁴

Show me that flash of your light, O friend.

I have become dumb and deaf and blind;

Be now steadfast, for the sake of our love, O friend.

“Die thou before thy death,”⁵ says the *Qura'n*;

Bring me back to life from death, O friend;

Beset with obstacles is the arduous path of love;

Put your foot with care on this path, O friend.

In everything and everyone You yourself abide;

You are the observer and the observed, O friend.

1. Seems to refer to the wise sayings of the Master.

2. When the Master lifts up his mask, the Lord appears. It signifies the identity of the Master with the Lord.

3. This verse is taken from the 'Kulliyat' of Dr. Faqir Mohammed, p. 103. Commentators in general have found it hard to explain. In it the poet has referred to the chapter 'Yasin of Muzammal' from the *Qura'n*. The allusion to the thunder of clouds has a possible reference to the specific sound of the particular spiritual region beyond the third eye.

4. It refers to Moses' hand, which was burnt on the orders of the Pharaoh. As a reward for this test, God granted to him the boon that the hands used to shine like the sun, whenever exposed to view. Esoterically, it could refer to the third eye, the bright eye center behind the two dark eyes.

5. The same as “dying while living,” mentioned in scriptures like the *Bible* and the *Adi Granth*. The expression means the ability to withdraw the soul current from the body to the eye center.

O Bullah, the Lord has come to my house;
Entertain Him with a sequence of dances, O friend.

Whatever color I am dyed in, the dye is of deep color;
It has the glow of my Master, O friend.

Nazir Ahmad, Kālam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 31

DEFICIENT AT STUDIES

In the analogy of a stubborn, wayward student, who fails to learn beyond the first letter of the alphabet, Bulleh Shah says that he has been reprimanded by everyone for his ineptitude in the subject of orthodox religious canons. "I refuse to learn it, and they label me as 'Willful'," says Bullah.

Later in the poem the analogy changes to one of an inept bride. If an undeserving student cannot be promoted to a higher class, an inept bride will not find admittance to her husband's house. If one is deficient in learning the intricacies of theology, say the priests, and fails to practice its rituals and customs, he will not be able to realize God. Bullah is reprimanded for his rebellious and unconventional ways not only by the priestly class, but also by the world at large, including his parents—"All my friends come together with rebukes, along with them reproach me my parents." On the other hand, he says that it is through love of the Master and the Lord, that he will find admittance to the court of the Beloved. He is not prepared to be weaned away from the path of love and take to the path of external observances of orthodox religion.

Ni kutichal mera nan

O friends, my name is "Willful."

The mullah taught me a lesson.

I could not learn anything beyond *Alif*.¹

He would beat me with the shoe.

O, friends, my name is "Willful."

1. First letter of the Arabic/Persian/Urdu alphabet.

Remember, how I set my eyes on Him!
 All my friends come together with rebukes,
 Along with them reproach me my parents.
 O, friends, my name is "Willful."

My in-laws give me no admittance,
 My grandfathers' folks turn me out.
 I have no place in my parents' house.
 O, friends, my name is "Willful."

All bewail my failure to learn.
 He¹ will not spare me for this fault.
 Where should I go? To whom should I turn?
 O, friends, my name is "Willful."

O Bullah, what has the Beloved done to me?
 May you² be afflicted by the same malady!
 Then alone will you administer justice.

O, friends, my name is "Willful."

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 306-307, poem 141

1. The mullah.

2. The mullah ; Bullah suggests that if the mullah also gets afflicted with love, he will realize and appreciate my true position.

DEPARTURE

Death has been compared to the departure of a bride to the house of her spouse. Just as a woman can endear herself to her husband and her in-laws by her sweet and humble nature, so also a man who leaves this world with love and devotion for the Lord in his heart will be accepted by Him. In the last stanza Bullah entertains the hope that despite his ineptitude, the Lord will clasp him to His heart, for He is love personified.

Tusi ao milo meri pyari

Come and meet me, dear ones!
The time of my departure is come!

All have come to bid me farewell,
My *mamis*,¹ *phuphies*,² *chachis*,³ *tais*.⁴
All of them are crying so bitterly!
The time of my departure is come!

All of them tender me this advice:
Always remain modest and humble;
This alone will endear you there.
The time of my departure is come!

They see me off and return to their homes;
I am left alone to proceed on my journey.
I have been separated from a flight of cranes!
The time of my departure is come.

O Bullah, were the Spouse come to my home,
And clasp to His heart His inept bride!
For strange are the ways of my Lord!

The time of my departure is come!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p.75, poem 43

1. Wives of mother's brothers.

2. Father's sisters.

3. Father's Younger brother's wives.

4. Father's elder brother's wives.

DESTINY

This short poem depicts the helplessness of man in shaping events and things. He is subject to the dictates of his destiny, and destiny cannot be changed. However, man himself is responsible for his destiny, for it is determined by the acts of his previous lives. Just as sparrows come to peck in the spring season, but some are eaten by hawks, some roasted on skewers, and some hanged by the noose, so also men in this world think that they are here to enjoy it, but they become victims of their fate, which is the result of their own past deeds.

Ai rut shagufiyan wali, chiriyan chuggan aiyan

The season of blossoms has arrived.

The sparrows have come to peck.

Some were caught and eaten by hawks,

Some were hanged by the noose.

Some have hope to return to the nest,

Some were roasted on skewers.

What is within their power, O Bullah,

As be the victims of their destiny?

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 5

DOGS ARE BETTER THAN YOU!

In this short beautiful lyric Bullah admonishes man by saying that a dog is superior to him in regard to service, loyalty and obedience. A dog remains awake at night to keep a watch over its master and his home. It does not mind sleeping on a heap of rubbish, notwithstanding the great service that it renders. And, even if it gets a shoe-beating because of the master's annoyance, it does not leave him or his door. At the end, Bullah advises us to prepare ourselves for our journey to the hereafter by learning these lessons from the dog. Otherwise, dogs will have won over men in the game of love!

Ratin jagen Karen ibadat

They keep awake at night and they serve;
The dogs keep awake at night;
The dogs are better than you!

They do not fail their duty of barking;
Then they go and sleep on a rubbish-heap.
The dogs are better than you!

They do not leave the door of their master,
Even if they get a shoe-beating from him.
The dogs are better than you!

O Bullah, buy some wares for your journey,
Or else the dogs will win the game.
The dogs are better than you!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 124, poem 63

DON'T HIDE BEHIND THE VEIL!

Hiding the face by the beloved after giving a glimpse is tantalizing for the lover. It is a fact that the face of Reality does not remain open for all time for a disciple. Its veil is only raised sometimes. In the intervals of separation, the longing in the lover for a sight of the beloved becomes sharper. This is the theme of this poem. The beloved here seems to be the Master, but it can also be the Lord.

The last two lines pertain to the true home of man. In this world he is a stranger, and there is an inborn inner urge in him to return to his true home—"I can bear the pangs of separation no more. I am a nightingale of the garden."

Ghungat ohle na luk sajjana!

Don't hide behind the veil, my Love!
I am eager to have a sight of you.

Without you I have gone crazy;
I have become a laughing-stock.
If the friend were to be solicitous,
I would then entreat to Him:
Don't hide behind the veil, my Love!

This slave is being sold free to you!
Come Love, my life is going waste.
I can bear the pangs of separation no more.
I am a nightingale of the garden.

Don't hide behind the veil, my Love!
I am eager to have a sight of you

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 68

DUST MINGLES WITH DUST

The existence of man ends in dust,¹ whether by cremation or by burial. How false then is his pride and vanity! Even those he holds most dear will never return to this world. During their life they cannot live for a moment without him, and yet at death they forsake him for ever. The life of one whose dear ones have departed becomes so vacant, that it is worse than death.

Helplessly man comes to this world, and helplessly he departs from it. He has no will of his own to determine where he has to stay. It is incumbent upon him to gather provisions for his journey. The only provision that he can take with him is the Lord's Name. Nothing of this world can go with him.

Khaki Khak sun ral janan

Made from earth you shall mingle with earth!
How illusive are power and vanity!

They who have gone have gone;
They will not come again—
My comrades, my friends, my darlings, my chums.
Without me they could not live for a moment,
Now, why have they forsaken me for ever?
Made from earth you shall mingle with earth!

I cannot drive away their memory from my mind,
I cannot restrain the sobs that come from my heart.
It is true that I sit among the living,
I am far worse than those who are dead.
Made from earth you shall mingle with earth!

1. Longfellow has aptly said: "Dust thou art, to dust returnest was not spoken of the soul." (see also page 40.)

There¹ the foot-soldiers pursued us,
 That is why we were forced to come here.²
 Here they do not let us settle;
 Where shall we go from here?
 Made from earth you shall mingle with earth!

O Bullah, they do not permit us to stay here;
 We leave it willy-nilly, weeping and crying.
 His Name alone is our provision for the journey;
 Not a penny of this world can we carry along.

Made from earth you shall mingle with earth!
 How illusive are power and vanity!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 115, poem 58

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1. The other world.
 2. This world.

ECSTASY OF LOVE

When a maiden is smitten with love, she loses all interest in the noise and gaiety of the world. She likes to keep aloof and revel in the thoughts of her beloved. After the blossom of love has sprouted in her heart, she is in a state of ecstasy, and is unwilling either to speak or to listen to anyone. Bulleh Shah, using the imagery of a girl engaged in spinning, describes the state of mind of the girl, when in her reverie, the cotton roll of her spinning wheel is taken away by a crow. The spiritual significance of the simile lies in the futility of the search for God outside in temples, mosques and places of pilgrimage. In quest of Him, those who go within themselves are not only saved from the external noise and religious dissensions, but are also blessed with the inner bliss of union with the Lord.

In the last stanza, as is his wont, Bulleh Shah, gives a spiritual turn to the poem and says: "If you love your Master truly, he will shower on you a thousand blessings."

Pyaria sanun mithra na lagda shor

This noise no longer pleases me, O dear;
No longer does it appeal to me.

A fresh flower has blossomed in my house;¹
I have experienced new thrills and delights.
You blame me not for aught, O dear.
This noise no longer pleases me.

O mother, I am dying of rapture,
The crow has snatched my cotton roll,

1. This indicates attaining to a joyful spiritual state.

I run after him crying:
For God's sake give back the roll to me.
This noise no longer pleases me.

O Bullah, if you love your Master truly,
He will shower on you a thousand blessings.
You take this vow in all sincerity:
I shall ever abide with my darling.

This noise no longer pleases me, O dear.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 65, poem 38

EVER FRESH SPRING OF LOVE

Love is ever new, ever fresh. It has a unique glory every time it makes its appearance. It is antagonistic to customs and conventions. When it is awakened in a devotee, he gives up going to worship places such as a mosque or a temple. His place of pilgrimage becomes his own body, within which he has a vision of the Lord, and where he revels in divine melody.

All distinctions of 'mine' and 'thine' disappear from his mind. His heart becomes pure, and he sees the Lord pervade in everyone.

The misguided seeker searches for God outside in temples and mosques, while He is constantly abiding within him—"Deluded Heer had sought him in woods, while beloved Ranjha played in her veil." The Lord is experienced within, not only as unstruck melody, but also as divine light—"Whosoever found, found Him as Light of lights."

Stanzas 4, 5, and 6 strongly denounce customs, rituals and all forms of external observances—"I am sick of reading *Vedas* and *Qura'ns*; my forehead is worn off by constant obeisance. God is not found at Hindu shrines nor at Muslims' Mecca . . . Burn the prayer-mat, break the *lota*,¹ touch not the rosary, nor the staff." Going to places of worship is futile, for what is required is purity of heart—"You have wasted your life in mosques. Your heart is still filled with filth."

In the last stanza Bullah says that in the ecstasy of love external prostration is forgotten, and the force of love makes him utter truth, which should perhaps have been left unsaid—"Love made me forget your adoration . . . Bullah does his best to keep quiet, but Love compels him to speak with force!"

1. A small, round pot, made generally of brass or copper.

Ishq di navion navin bahar

Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love !

When I learnt the lesson of love,
My heart dreaded the sight of mosques.
I then entered the abode of the Lord,
Where resounded a thousand melodies.
Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love !

When I grasped the hint of love,
I banished 'mine' and 'thine' from me.
I was cleansed within and without.
Now, wherever I look, the Beloved pervades.
Ever new, ever fresh, is the spring of love !

Heer and Ranjha are united at last !
Deluded Heer had sought him in woods,
While beloved Ranjha played in her veil.
Before Him I lost my sense and wits.
Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love !

I am sick of reading *Vedas* and *Qura'ns*;
My forehead is worn off by constant obeisance.
God is not found at Hindu shrines,
nor at Muslims' Mecca.
Whosoever found, found Him as Light of lights.
Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love !

Burn the prayer-mat, break the *lota*,
And touch not the rosary, nor the staff.
The lovers proclaim at the top of their voice:
"Give up *halal*¹ and eat *murdar* !"²
Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love !

1. The lawful ; having religious sanctions.

2. Literally the dead body : here it means 'forbidden by orthodox religion.'

You have wasted your life in mosques.
Your heart is still filled with filth.
Never did you realize the unity of God.
Now why do you raise a hue and cry?
Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of Love!

Love made me forget your adoration.
Now why in vain pick up a quarrel?
Bullah does his best to keep quiet,
But Love compels him to speak with force!

Ever new, ever fresh is the spring of love!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 157-159, poem 76

FACE OF THE BELOVED

Using once again the analogy of Heer and Ranjha, Bulleh Shah reveals that the Lord Himself aroused love in man for Him. And, if it was He who aroused the strong longing in man for a union with Him, then He is the one who will satisfy this longing. Love is a gift from God himself and is reverberated in the whole universe.

In the last stanza, Bulleh Shah proclaims that love has made him immortal, and he will live for all time to come.

Sade wall mukhra mor, ve pyarya

Turn your face to me, my Love !

Turn your face to me !

You yourself fastened your hook¹ on me,

And now you yourself pull the string.

Turn your face to me, my Love !

From your heavenly seat you gave out the call,²

And tumult arose in the holy Mecca.

Turn Your face to me, my Love !

The *Kheras*³ are taking me away in the palanquin,⁴

I have neither an excuse nor any strength to resist.

Turn Your face to me, my Love !

O mother, if the *Kheras* are dear to you,

Pray, put someone else into the palanquin.

Turn Your face to me, my Love !

1. At the time of Creation.

2. God's love for man resounded all over the universe in the form of His Word.

3. The tribe in which Heer was married against her wishes.

4. It is customary for the bride to be carried in a palanquin.

O Lord of Bullah, I will not die !
It must be someone else who has died.¹

Turn Your face to me, my Love !
Turn Your face to me !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 137-138, poem 67

1. I have become immortal in Your love and it is only my mind which has been eliminated for ever.

FALL NOT IN LOVE

Love entails suffering in its wake. A warning is given here against making hasty attachments. And yet the pull of love is so strong that men of strong will and character have been vanquished before it. Bulleh Shah counts in this poem a number of classic examples, when Love brought much pain and suffering to the lovers. Yusuf, Zulaikha, Majnun, Shams-i-Tabriz, Zakaria and Mansur had all to pay a heavy price for the love they cherished in their hearts. The love which is the most potent in its effect is the one that saints administer to their disciples. Bulleh Shah calls them the distillers who prepare the wine of love and knowledge of God, and it has the most telling effect on those who drink it.

The last stanza has been written in a satirical vein. Bulleh Shah cynically admonishes the lover not to trespass orthodox law, to be able to live in peace and enjoy sound sleep. If he were to get inebriated with the wine of love like Mansur, he would have to sing love songs from the scaffold !

Pyaria sanbhal ke niunh la

O dear, beware of falling in love,
Lest you should repent thereafter !

Go, if you must, but retrace not your steps.
In that land, none will care for you.
Even lions¹ tremble with fear there,
You too will be caught in the net.
O dear, beware of falling in love !

1. Men with high spiritual aims and attainments.

Yusuf was thrown down into a well;
 Then he was sold in the market;
 For a hank of thread, he was sold, indeed,
 You will be sold just for a cownie.
 O dear, beware of falling in love.

Look what Zulaikha got out of love!
 Look how lovers suffer agonizing pain!
 Even Majnun cried out in pangs of love.
 What will you fetch from there, O friend?
 O dear, beware of falling in love.

Skin of some is flayed there;¹
 With the saw² where some are slashed;
 Some are hanged with a hangman's noose;³
 You, too, will get beheaded there.
 O dear, beware of falling in love.

The house of the distillers⁴ is to your side;
 The thirsty come to get drunk there.
 They drink the goblets filled to the brim.
 You too will be tempted to have a go.
 O dear, beware of falling in Love!

To which land have you gone, my Love?
 Who knows what may happen tomorrow?
 Do not mix with the drunk ones,
 Lest you too should be called tipsy.
 O dear, beware of falling in love.

O Bullah, do not transgress the bounds of law,⁵
 To enjoy a sound, peaceful sleep,

1. Reference to Shams-i-Tabriz.

2. Zakaria.

3. Mansur.

4. Sufi saints who prepare and give the wine of love and knowledge of God.

5. The poet satirically suggests that those who try to rise above the outward customs of orthodox religion have to suffer, while those who conform to its canons have nothing to fear in this world.

Do not shout the slogan, "I am the Truth",
Lest you too are driven to the gallows.

O dear, beware of falling in love,
Lest you should repent thereafter !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 69-71, poem 41

FALSE KNOWLEDGE

All knowledge other than the realization of God is ultimately of no avail. In fact, it can be a great hindrance in the way of God-realization. Instead of employing all his time in acquiring worldly knowledge, man should also devote sufficient time in concentrating his attention on acquiring the knowledge of the unity of God—"All that you need to know is *Alif*."

The second stanza brings out the futility of reading a large number of books—including scriptures—for what is needed is practice of what is written, under the guidance of a Master.

The third stanza dilates upon the life-style of pedants, who take pride in being considered great scholars, but who are totally devoid of any spiritual wealth. At the time of departure from this world comes to them the realization that they have wasted their time. But, alas, this realization is too late !

Stanzas 4, 5, and 6 deal with exploitation of ignorant masses by preachers in the name of religion. There is no correspondence between what they preach and what they practice. The motivating force behind their actions is personal gain and aggrandizement.

The acquisition of mundane knowledge sometimes takes the form of study of astronomy, in which one not only gets involved in the calculations of various zodiac signs, but also in the practice of magic charms and exorcism.

The other evil effect of such knowledge is that one remains alienated from moral and spiritual values—"You capture saints and let go thieves . . . You accept a penny and apply the knife."

Among other complications arising from such knowledge is doubt and skepticism. It holds the traveler from progress on the spiritual path. And since the seeker remains separated from the Lord, his life is miserable.

In stanza 12 there is a reference to Satan, who tempted Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the "Tree of Immortality." (*Qura'n*, XX, 116-21). Also, in the conceit of his knowledge Adam refused to obey the Lord's decree to prostrate before man (*Qura'n*, XV, 303).

The last stanza is a tribute by Bullah to his Master, who on the arduous path of love leads him to safety through all its trials and tribulations.

Ilmon bas karin O yar

Gather no more knowledge, O friend !

This knowledge will be of no avail.

All that you need to know is *Alif*.¹

Life is fleeting, its end uncertain.

Gather no more knowledge, O friend !

You read and read, and pile up a heap;

The *Qura'n* and other books lie all around you.

All around is light, but within you is darkness.

Without the guide there can be no knowledge.

Gather no more knowledge, O friend !

You read and read and become a Sheikh.²

You fill your stomach and sleep like a log.

While departing your eyes are tearful.

You are drowned mid-sea and reach nowhere.

Gather no more knowledge, O friend !

1. Stands for unity of God.

2. Venerable old man.

You read and read and become crazy.
 You exploit, you rob the innocent, unlettered.
 What a big sham you perpetrate, O friend!
 And you never bring this practice to a stop.
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend!

You recite prayers to unnecessary length.
 You keep yelling at the top of your voice.
 You mount the pulpit and declaim sermons.
 Your greed has led you to abject ruin.
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend!

By constant reading mullahs become *qazis*;
 But God is happy without such knowledge.
 Their greed is whetted day after day.
 Their acts are aimed at personal gain.
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend!

You read and administer homilies daily;
 But you eat the food of doubt and suspicion.
 You preach one thing and practice another.
 True without, you are false within!
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend!

You read and read and ponder over astrology;
 You count all the various zodiac signs.
 You read charms and practice exorcism.
 You make amulets and calculate *abjad*.¹
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend!

From such knowledge other problems arise.
 Endowed with eyes you are totally blind.
 You capture saints and let go thieves.
 O, you are disgraced in both the worlds!
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend!

1. The name of an arithmetical arrangement of the alphabet, the letters of which have different powers.

Such knowledge produces thousands of hurdles;
 The wayfarers are held up on the path.
 Afflicted with parting, their hearts break;
 And its weight hangs heavy on their heads.
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend !

By this knowledge you are called, Good Sir !
 You tuck up your trousers and trudge to the market.
 You accept a penny and apply the knife.¹
 You harbor much love for the class of butchers.
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend !

Much knowledge was acquired by Satan;
 His hearth and home were burnt to ashes.²
 A necklace of curses hung round his neck;
 And, at long last, he lost the game !
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend !

When I learnt the lesson of love,
 I was frightened of the sea of unity.
 I was caught in its eddies and swirls;
 But Shah Inayat helped me to cross it.

Gather no more knowledge, O friend !

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, pp. 277-280, poem 80

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1. To kill an animal. There was a custom that the mullah would mutter a holy verse and authorize killing of an animal, on payment of a penny to him.
 2. See *Qura'n*: XV, 30-3; XVII, 61, XXXVIII, 73-74.

FALSE REPENTANCE

There is no conformity between the speech and actions of men. This is particularly so in the moral and spiritual aspects of their life—"They repent in words, not from the heart . . . What repentance is this."

In their professional life, the main motivating force is monetary gain, even at the cost of honest dealings—"You lend one measure to take back a quarter plus." No religion allows such dealings, and yet in the name of religion it is being practiced—"When did Islam impart such teaching? . . . You ever pray 'Forgive me, O Lord', " "You falsely swear by holy books."

In their moral life, people indulge in immoral actions and utilize others' property—"You go to places you should not. You set your heart on things of others." They also practice cruelty, for which they have to suffer grievously in the next life.

In the last stanza Bullah proclaims that the only way to be saved from all these dangers is to find a guide and follow his instructions. He himself will be safely ferried across the ocean of this world by his Master, Inayat Shah.

Nit parhnaen istaghfar

You ever pray "Forgive me, O Lord!"
What repentance is this, O friend?

You lend one measure,
To take back a quarter plus.
Such illicit profit you corner!
When did Islam impart such teaching?
Such are your deeds!
What repentance is this, O friend?

You go to places you should not,
 You set your heart on things of others.
 You falsely swear by holy books.
 Such is your trust!
 What repentance is this, O friend?

Fearlessly tyrants practice cruelty,
 They perish for their evil deeds.
 They repent in words, not from the heart.
 They earn disgrace here,
 They get disgrace hereafter.
 What repentance is this, O friend.

O Bullah, heed to the counsel of the Lord;
 The Master alone will impart instruction.
 My Master is Shah Inayat;
 He will ferry me across the gulf.

You ever pray "Forgive me, O Lord!"
 What repentance is this, O friend?

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, pp. 280-281, poem 81

FOR THE SAKE OF MY BELOVED

This lyric is steeped in love and longing. With the usual analogy of Heer and Ranjha, where Ranjha denotes the Master or the Lord and Heer stands for the disciple or the seeking soul, Bullah gives a vivid description of the state of intense love with the pain of longing and pining in it, and the contempt with which the lover takes the taunts and reproaches of the people of the world.

The surcharged imagination of the lover sometimes makes him feel that the Beloved is present before him—"His presence besides my bed is my very life." And, as was Heer impervious to public opinion—"Why does the world remind me of customs?" so is the lover indifferent to public ridicule and insults hurled by people.

In the last stanza Bullah conveys his wishes and expresses his hope that the Beloved would come, and the pangs of separation would end.

Mittar pyare karan ni

For the sake of my Beloved, I put up with the taunts
of people.

The one with whom I have fallen in love,
His presence beside my bed is my very life.
Why does the world remind me of customs?
I cannot survive without a sight of Him.
For the sake of my Beloved, I put up with the taunts
of people.

Make me understand a little, brothers;
 Why does Ranjha remain hidden from me?
 He whose love has made me distracted,
 He does not let me rest in peace.
 For the sake of my Beloved, I put up with the taunts
 of people.

Longing for Him has entered my courtyard.
 Forcibly it has enveloped my being.
 There is no remedy for my pain except Him.
 O, I am going to die without my Beloved!
 For the sake of my Beloved, I put up with the taunts
 of people.

O Bullah, if Ranjha were to come to my house,
 Clasp me, aflame with love, to His heart,
 And spend the night in bliss with me,
 My subsequent days would pass in bliss.

For the sake of my Beloved, I put up with the taunts
 of people.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 237-238, poem 109

FRIENDS, CONGRATULATE ME

Once again using the analogy of Heer and Ranjha, Bulleh Shah expresses his joy and gratitude in having found his Master, Inayat Shah—"Friends, offer me your felicitations, I have found my spouse in beloved Ranjha!"

The Master has come to this world in the guise of a vegetable grower, and people do not recognize in him the Lord Himself—"With a staff in hand and a blanket on his shoulders, he has assumed the guise of a cowherd. A crown is being trampled in the cow-shed."

In the last stanza there is a reference to the suffering entailed in love. In this bargain, says Bullah, he has not gained or lost anything, but he has carried a bundle of sorrows. "Bulleh Shah has struck a bargain, he has drunk a cup of poison. He has neither gained nor lost anything, but he carries a bundle of sorrows." This last stanza conveys a mood quite opposed to the one displayed in the first stanza. The opening lines express only the joy experienced by Bulleh Shah in finding his Master. The closing lines remind us of the suffering he had to go through as the price he had to pay in this arduous search.

Sayyo ni ral dayo vadhai

Friends, offer me your felicitations,
I have found my spouse in beloved Ranjha!

Today has risen as an auspicious day;
Ranjha has entered my courtyard.
With a staff in hand and a blanket on his shoulders,
He has assumed the guise of a cow-herd.

A crown is being trampled in the cow-shed;
 What value can it have in forests and pastures?
 He appears to be a man of God.
 Alas! no one knows his real splendor.

Bulleh Shah has struck a bargain;
 He has drunk a cup of poison.
 He has neither gained nor lost anything,
 But he carries a bundle of sorrows.

Friends, offer me your felicitations,
 I have found my spouse in beloved Ranjha!

Nazir Ahmed, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, pp. 43-44

“GOODNESS” OF OUR FOREFATHERS

This *kafi*, if it can be called one, is ambiguous in terms of its detailed meaning. But, in general, it can be said that the poet is referring satirically to his primal ancestors, viz. Adam and Eve. For instance, he calls their transgression or mistake as their “goodness”, and says that their goodness now “comes down to us.” In other words, we are suffering the consequences of their deeds.

He considers them as the original sinners, for they picked up wheat¹ despite forbiddance! As a result we have been hurled into constant trouble ever since. That progeny of Adam which is contemporaneous with the poet, picks up a quarrel, according to him, for a slight gain out of selfishness. Every family tends to be hostile to the other.

Such is the result of the seed sown by our ancestors!

Amman babe di bhalyai!

The “goodness” of our forefathers,¹ recoils on us!

Mother and father² were thieves from the beginning;
The son has inherited their greatness,
Women quarrel³ over a grain of wheat,
Struggle and strife rule every home.

These troubles descended on the progeny,
For the wheat picked by their Elders.⁴

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1. The “forbidden fruit” is, in Jewish tradition, mainly mentioned as: grape, or fig., or wheat. The same and other opinions are found in Christian and Muslim tradition and other commentaries to Qura’n. (Encyclopaedia of Islam—page 177)
 2. Adam and Eve.
 3. Literally, women catch each other’s plaits of hair in a fight.
 4. Adam and Eve, when they were expelled from paradise for the original sin of eating wheat. (Christians claim it was an apple)

Khaira eats, and Juma has to pay for it;¹
A perverse order so prevails!

O Bullah, parrots have been hunted out;
And, owls have settled in their place.

The "goodness" of our forefathers, recoils on us!
Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 27, poem 16

1. One man sins and quite another suffers.

GUILES OF THE BELOVED

In this lyric the vision of the beloved in a dream by the lover is mentioned. This thought is taken from the famous classic of Yusuf and Zulaikha, in which Yusuf had appeared to Zulaikha in a dream. The subsequent life of Zulaikha became a torture till she was united with Yusuf. The intervening period was one of intense suffering of separation. Thus the theme of this poem is love and the suffering it entails in the separation from the Beloved.

In the last stanza Bullah rises from the mundane to the divine by stating that the Beloved is to be found within oneself. This consummation is to be achieved through the help rendered by the Master. There is also a hint in the stanza that before long one feels penitent for the time wasted in life—time spent without the bliss of union with the Lord. The poem, as usual, ends with the happy note that union with the Beloved has at last been achieved.

Dekho ni pyara mainun sufne mein chhal gaya

Hark, O friends, the Beloved has tricked me
in a dream!

In sleep I was beguiled,
Like Zulaikha I am tortured.
A grievous wound has love inflicted,
Every limb of mine has been shaken.

I called the soothsayers,
I got ausian¹ cast by them.

1. A figure is drawn on the ground in the form of a head of a rake by which a superstitious prediction is made for the visit of a friend/husband.

Astrologers gave no assurance.
Tears gushed forth from my eyes.

He does not come near me;
He views me from afar.
His looks strike me with awe.
The Mount Sinai¹ stands burnt!

In the self He is discovered,
Through Inayat² is He found.
Repentance comes to one soon.
O Bullah, I have met the Lord today!

Hark, O friends, the Beloved has tricked me
in a dream!

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, p. 162, poem 38

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1. Moses wanted to see God face to face. God did not show himself directly to Moses, but manifested His glory on Mount Sinai and burnt it to ashes. Moses repented and became the first to believe. See Sura VII, 142-145 of the *Qura'n*.
 2. There is a pun on the word "Inayat", which stands for Bullah's Master but literally means favor or grace. The line may also be translated as "By grace is He found."

GURU IS ALL-POWERFUL

This *kafi*, is written in praise of the Master, who is all-powerful. In fact he is the Lord himself in the human form—"He puts on a garb to become man," also, "The Guru is called the Almighty himself." And, it is in the form of man that He redeems mankind.

The first stanza refers to the great damage that the five passions are inflicting on man, without his being aware of it—"There was a theft in my house. I kept sleeping and none awoke." This realization comes through the grace of the Master—"I found the Guru and learnt it all." Not only that, the Guru makes the disciple acquainted with Nam, by means of which he triumphs over the five "thieves"

The second and third stanzas deal with the fiat of creation. In the beginning there was no manifest existence—"At first He was a hidden treasure. There prevailed an astonishing void." He then displayed himself as a unitary being—"Then He came into the state of One." Again, He multiplied himself into many—"The many were then born out of the One." That is how creation proliferated. And, yet, the Lord is present in a hidden form in everyone of His countless creatures—"He then hides himself behind the veils. He adorns himself in countless garbs." It is the Guru, who through the instrument of love, makes the Lord manifest to man.

Gur jo Chahe so karda ei

The Guru does whatever he wills.

There was a theft in my house,¹
 I kept sleeping and none awoke.
 I found the Guru and learnt it all.
 The lost stock still floats.
 The Guru does whatever he wills.

At first He was a hidden treasure.
 There prevailed an astonishing void.
 Then He came into the state of One.
 A fine veil lies between a part and the whole.
 The Guru does whatever he wills.

He said, "Let there be, and it became!"
 The many were then born out of the One.
 He puts on a garb to become man;
 Then He enters the mosque to say His prayers.
 The Guru does whatever he wills.

He asked of men the day of the pledge:
 "Am I not your God?" And they said, "Yes."
 He then hides himself behind the veils.
 He adorns himself in countless garbs.
 The Guru does whatever he wills.

The Guru is called the Almighty himself.
 The Guru is saint, the Guru is prophet.
 He makes a home in every heart,
 He fills to the brim all empty vessels.
 The Guru does whatever he wills.

1. Body

Bullah found in his home the Lord,
Who disguised himself in various forms.
He kept it secret from the world.
He firmly believes in the lesson of love.

The Guru does whatever he wills.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 215-217, poem 99

HE DESERTED ME

The classic love tale employed by Bullah in this *kafi* is of Sassi and Punnun. Sassi and Punnun had been united, but the kinsmen of Punnun were averse to this union. By a stratagem, they got Punnun in a state of drunkenness and took him across the deserts of Sind to their home in Baluchistan. When Sassi found him missing from her house, she went in search of him and died in the desert in a state of extreme anguish.

In this poem Bullah seems to refer to the departure of his Master, whose separation he found hard to bear. In the last stanza he cherishes the hope that his days of torture would come to an end, as his Master would return to him.

Mainun chhadd gaye ap ladd gaye

He left me, and himself departed.¹
What fault was there in me?

Neither at night nor in the day do I sleep in peace;
My eyes pour out tears!

Sharper than swords and spears
Are the arrows of love!

There is no one as cruel as love;
This malady no physician can cure.

There is no peace, not for a moment;
So intense is the pain of separation!

1. Reference is to the story of Sassi and Punnun. Punnun left his beloved Sassi in the deserts of Sind, and she died there in anguish.

O Bullah, if the Lord were to shower his grace,¹
My days would radically change!

He left me, and himself departed.
What fault was there in me?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 264-265, poem 120

1. There is a pun on the word Inayat, which was the name of Bulleh Shah's Master, and which literally means grace.

HIDE NO MORE

Apparently, the husband of a woman has taken offence at something and hidden himself from his wife. She recalls some poignant, memorable experiences she shared with her husband, and pines for a reconciliation. She makes all sorts of entreaties to her husband to win back his affection. Esoterically, the poem signifies that the Lord is nearer to us than our very breath, but remains hidden because of our ego and our sins. We can unite with Him, if we shed our faults, repent for our past sins, and have a true longing for union with Him.

Bas kar ji hun bas kar ji

No more of this, now no more of this!
Speak a word to me with a smile, O Dear.

You dwell right within my heart;
Why then do You run away from me?
You cast Your spell, You steal my heart;
Where will You run away now?
No more of this, now no more of this!

You stop not slaying already slain.
You treat me like a ball on the ground.
You gag me if I utter a word.
You have shot me through now with a shaft!
No more of this, now no more of this!

You hide yourself, I find You out;
I have caught you in my tresses;
Still You try to hide from me.
I shall not let You run away now.
No more of this, now no more of this!

O You spouse of Bullah, I am Your slave.
I pine for a glimpse of Your face.
I make hundreds of entreaties,
Now entrench yourself in the cage of my body.

No more of this, now no more of this!
Speak a word to me with a smile, O Dear.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 40-42, poem 25

HINT FROM THE BELOVED!

This poem deals mainly with the pain involved in and the price paid for love. However, in the midst of such suffering, there is an inner joy, which is known only to lovers—"They are intoxicated with the wine of love . . . All except the lovers are blind to it." They would not forego the pain of love for any price. And yet for people desirous of worldly pleasures and comforts, it is expedient to keep away from it—"From the house-top I proclaim: Do not strike the bargain of love."

Bullah addresses the poem, as usual, to his Master, Inayat Shah—"O! fie! He showed such unconcern! The Thug of Lahore has cheated me." Yet, he mentions the names of some other famous lovers who paid a heavy price for their love, and which occur in a number of his other *kafis*. These recurring names are Shirin and Farhad, Yusuf and Zulaikha, Laila and Majnun, Sassi and Punnun, Sohni and Mahinwal, and last but not least, Heer and Ranjha.

The last stanza obviously refers to God, whom no physical senses can perceive—"O Bullah, none can behold the Beloved . . . He has no shape, no form, no color; He has hidden himself like a thief." Even the one who realizes Him cannot describe Him—"And whoever sees Him is not to be counted."

Wah wah ramz sajan di hor!

Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !
All except the lovers are blind to it.

From the house-top I proclaim ;
Do not strike the bargain of love,
Never be taken in by its guiles.

It gives not peace in forest or city.
Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !

In both the worlds are lovers beguiled.
The blandishments of beloveds take their lives ;
One wounded by love never survives.
How ruthlessly does it tear into pieces !
Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !

He showed his face and took to his way ;
Suddenly a noose slid round my neck.
O ! fie ! He showed such unconcern !
Oh, the beloved Thug of Lahore has cheated me !
Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !

Pangs of separation comprised Shirin's food ;
Poor Farhad was forlorn on the mountain.
Yusuf was sold in the bazaars of Egypt.
The blind ones could not see who he was.
Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !

Laila and Majnun were both its slaves.
Sohni was drowned in turbulent waters.
Heer had given up all her relatives,
When the Beloved pulled the string.
Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !

Lovers keep aloof and roam in silence ;
They are intoxicated with the wine of love.
They are entangled in the noose of tresses,
Where no device of release is found.
Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !

If the Beloved were to come and meet me,
I would sacrifice my life unto Him.
In form and grace he is the peer of Yusuf,
Whose fame has raised a tumult in the world.
Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !

1. Inayat Shah lived in Lahore.

O, Bullah, none can behold the Beloved ;
And whoever sees Him is not to be counted.
He has no shape, no form, no color;
He has hidden himself like a thief.

Hail ! the hint from the Beloved is different !
All except the lovers are blind to it.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 309-311, poem 143

HIS OMNIPRESENCE

A pantheistic strain runs throughout this poem. Once the Lord has been realized within, He is seen in everything and in everyone outside. He is as much present in foes as in friends. He is in Majnun as also in Laila. He is to be found not only in the Master, but also in the disciple.

He is no less present in the temple than in the mosque. Nor does Bullah make a distinction between a Muslim and a Hindu. And those who get lost in such parochial differences do so only as a part of His grand design—"Somewhere He lets himself be lost in a labyrinth."

The last stanza ends with a prayer for union with the Lord, a union which would be everlasting bliss. And this union can come only through the help of the Master—"If I were to meet my Master, I would be wedded with the Lord."

Paya hai kujh paya hai

I have seen, verily I have seen;
The Satguru has shown me the Unseen.

Somewhere He is hostile, somewhere friendly.
Somewhere He is Majnun, somewhere Laila.
Somewhere He is a guru, somewhere a disciple.
In all He manifests His own path.
I have seen, verily I have seen.

Somewhere He becomes a robber,
somewhere the robbed.
Somewhere He becomes a *Qazi*
to preach on a pulpit.

Somewhere He is a *Ghazi* to display His skill in war.
 In all He himself points to His ways !
 I have seen, verily I have seen.

Somewhere He builds a mosque for prayers.
 Somewhere He erects a temple with idols.
 Somewhere He takes the form of an anchoret.
 Somewhere He comes in the garb of a *Sheikhan*.¹
 I have seen, verily I have seen.

Somewhere He is found on the Muslim prayer-mat ;
 Somewhere He is seen reciting Hindu scriptures.
 Somewhere He lets himself be lost in a labyrinth.
 In every house He has showered His love !
 I have seen, verily I have seen.

O Bullah, I am in need of my Spouse.
 If I were to meet my Master,
 I would be wedded with the Lord.
 The sight of my Beloved would be my cure.
 Smitten with His love, I sing His praise.

I have seen, verily I have seen ;
 The Satguru has shown me the Unseen.

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, p. 206, poem 58

1. Female Sheikh.

I AM FREE

This short poem describes the state of a lover or a mystic, who is completely free from all worldly constraints. He is not burdened with any chains or shackles. He does not quite fit in either the category of believers or infidels, for he does not merely believe in the existence of the Lord, but has experience of Him. Nor can he be put in the class of masters or of servants. He does not command anyone, nor is he under anyone's command. He is not concerned with praise or blame. There is a glow of moral excellence in his actions flowing from selfless love for one and all.

Esoterically, the poem describes the true state of the individual, which is that of a pure soul, unencumbered by any constraints, such as those of the body, the mind, the attributes and so on. The soul in its native state, is immortal and free from all change.

The last line of the poem pertains to the immortal existence of the soul of Bulleh Shah.

Main beqaid, main beqaid

I am unfettered ! I am unshackled !

I am neither sick nor a physician ;

I am neither a believer, nor an infidel ;

I am neither a lord, nor a serf.

I move freely in the fourteen realms,

I am not constrained anywhere.

I visit the tavern without praise or blame.

Wherefore do you ask the essence of Bullah ?

He is unbegetting and unbegotten.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 76

I AM LOST TO MYSELF

In the intense love for the Beloved, the lover forgets himself. For him the Beloved alone exists. And, he does not only become oblivious of his surroundings, the surroundings themselves are transformed, and the Beloved seems to pervade everywhere. For the mystic who has attained the introvertive experience of the Lord within himself, also gets the extrovertive experience of seeing the Lord everywhere in the outside world. It is to this realization that Bullah refers in the last line—"Give not a hint of it to anyone, that Bullah has well realized the Truth."

Ni sayyo main gayi guachi

O friends, I am lost to myself;
Lifting¹ my veil I dance in the open.

Wherever I look, Him alone I see;
By Him I swear, none else exists.
"He is with you" went round the world,
When the Master read from the scroll.
O friends, I am lost to myself;
Lifting my veil I dance in the open.

O friends, no trace of I-ness is left !
The secret I tell you, do not disclose.
Give not a hint of it to anyone,
That Bullah has well realized the Truth.

O friends, I am lost to myself;
Lifting my veil I dance in the open.

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, p. 348, poem 115

1. Shamelessly; showing scant regard for tradition and world-opinion.

I CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT YOU

Separation from his Master is unbearable for Bullah. In his absence everything acquires a somber color—"I cannot live, Maharaj, I cannot live without you. There is no fragrance in these withered flowers, no hope for his return, who has gone to a foreign land."

The second stanza gives a warning about the impending death—"The demon of death hovers over thee," and implores us not to waste our precious time in frivolous activities.

The third stanza harps on the suffering in love.

The last stanza brings about a happy ending by announcing the arrival of the Beloved—"O Bullah, the Lord comes from a strange land, with bracelets on wrists and with outstretched arms."

Na jiwan maharaj main tere bin

I cannot live, Maharaj, ¹ I cannot live without you.

There is no fragrance in these withered flowers.

There is no hope of his return,

Who has gone to a foreign land.

My love is no longer with me !

I cannot live, Maharaj, I cannot live without you.

Why do you sleep thus carelessly ?

The demon of death hovers over thee.

You never cared to do a virtuous deed.

I cannot live, Maharaj, I cannot live without you.

What have I gained having become yours ?

I lost my eyes by ceaseless tears.

1. An epithet for the Master.

My face I wash to repeat your name.

I cannot live, Maharaj, I cannot live without you.

O Bullah, the Lord comes from a strange land,
With bracelets on wrists and with outstretched arms.
My head and my life I sacrifice to your name !

I cannot live, Maharaj, I cannot live without you.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 301, poem 138

I TALK OF THE BEYOND

This poem pertains to the time when God alone existed, and the world had not yet been created. At the time of Creation, God had made a solemn promise with the souls that He would come into the world to redeem them. Now, it seems He has virtually gone back on His promise,¹ since He has created a screen between himself and the souls, although He abides in everyone. He is, therefore, responsible for putting men in delusion, as they search for Him outside in temples and mosques, and do not look for Him within themselves.

In the second stanza Bullah says that man's quest for God is like an unequal fight in a contest, when the adversary is too strong—"I have to play a game with the dominant ruler. Even if I win, I am still declared lost."

The next stanza deals with the frustration that follows the futile attempts to find Him. Wasting the whole life in the practice of rituals and external observances has been compared to losing all one's capital foolishly and then keeping guard after the thieves leave with the booty. Realization of this folly at the time of death is futile—"And now every night I do keep a vigil." But, perhaps, it was all written in one's destiny on account of his past sins—"Such is the price I pay for my past!"

In the fifth stanza Bullah laments for having come to this transient world, full of suffering—"What comfort

1. The Lord always keeps His promise, but while struggling one sometimes feels that he is forsaken, when actually, He is helping us to get rid of our load of karmas. This is unbeknown to us until we have gone within and can see for ourselves what He is doing for us. But with His grace, through the Master, we are able to face whatever we have to endure. Thus, we are purified—like gold in a smelter—and can eventually return to Him and enjoy everlasting peace and bliss.

did I get by coming to this world, where neither destination nor halting places exist?" And, one is not even aware when death will come—"Wherefore should I ring the bell of departure? Daily I keep the camel in readiness to leave."

In the last stanza Bullah compares the phenomenal universe to a dreadful ocean, whose depth cannot be fathomed—"O Bulleh Shah, there is an infinite depth; none in the two worlds can fathom it." And one has to bungle through it without aim and without direction—"In it I ever flounder without my head and feet!"

Main gall othe di karda han

I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

With the souls you made a false promise :

"You go and I shall soon follow you."

But here you have created a screen.

And I wander about lost in delusion.

I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

I have to play a game with the dominant ruler.

Even if I win, I am still declared lost.

All my stock is now Your wealth.

Such is the price I pay for my past !

I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

After handing over the stock, like a fool I fretted.

I, then, kept guard after the thieves departed.

Still I did follow the track of the thieves.

And now every night I do keep a vigil.

I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

He does not feel satisfied with me,

Nor is He happy with my entreaties.

When I turn my face, He flees from me.

Again I make my supplication to Him.
I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

What comfort did I get by coming to this world,
Where neither destination nor halting places exist?
Wherefore should I ring the bell of departure?
Daily I keep the camel in readiness to leave.
I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

O Bulleh Shah, there is an infinite depth;
None in the two worlds can fathom it.
There is no knowledge of this bank or that.
In it I ever flounder without my head and feet !¹

I talk of there, but I am afraid even of talking.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 284-286, poem 132

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1. A drowning man can hold to the ground neither with feet nor with head. Similar is the state of one, drowning in the ocean of existence, until he is rescued by his Master.

IN A NEW ATTIRE

Ranjha, in this lyric, stands as the symbol of God, and Heer represents the soul. Ever since the soul has been separated from its source, it has been pining to go back to it. Notwithstanding all the comforts and luxury that man might possess in this world, there is an inner feeling of loneliness, which constantly nags at him. This feeling will not end till the soul unites back with the Lord.

It is not that the Lord is unconcerned with the suffering of man. He is in love with the soul, which indeed is a part of Him. When God had not manifested himself, all the souls were united with Him. When they were separated, there was a covenant between them, that He would reunite those with Him, who were really desirous to do so—"Separated from her since the very first night, He has come in search of union, O girls!" So, the Lord is as keen to end the period of separation as is the yearning soul.

Kaun aya paihan libas kure !

Who comes clad in a new attire ?

Ask Him in all frankness, O girls !

A staff in hand, a black blanket on shoulders,

A light aglow in His eyes—

He comes not as a servant, but as one intoxicated.

Make Him sit by you and ask Him, O girls.

Who comes clad in a new attire ?

Do not call Him a cowherd or a servant boy,

He is not without some secret design.

Separated from her since the very first night,
 He has come in search of union, O girls !
 Who comes clad in a new attire ?

He is by no means a servant or a cowherd;
 Nor has He any fancy for buffaloes;
 Nor is He fond of milk and curd;
 Nor has He any hunger or thirst, O girls !
 Who comes clad in a new attire ?

O Bullah, the Spouse has concealed himself
 behind a veil.
 He reveals not the secret, nor does He
 open his mouth.
 My father seeks a bridegroom for me
 amongst the Kheras;
 And my bridegroom is right before me, O girls !
 Who comes clad in a new attire ?
 Ask Him in all frankness, O girls !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 191-192, poem 88

IN LOVE

In a beautiful short lyric Bullah pours out from his heart the unbearable pain of separation from his Beloved. He vividly describes his state, in which he is constantly restless and is unable to sleep either during the day or at night. It is a state in which he cannot live, because the pain of separation is unendurable; but can he neither die, because he has hope that his Beloved would relent and come. Apparently, Bullah wrote this poem when he was away from his Master, and he was pining for him.

Ab lagan lagi kih kariye

I have been pierced by the arrow of love,
what shall I do?

I can neither live, nor can I die.

Listen ye to my ceaseless outpourings.

I have peace neither by night, nor by day.

I cannot do without my Beloved even for a moment.

I have been pierced by the arrow of love,
what shall I do?

I can neither live, nor can I die.

The fire of separation is unceasing,

Let someone take care of my love.

How can I be saved without seeing him?

I have been pierced by the arrow of love,
what shall I do?

I can neither live, nor can I die.

O Bullah, I am in dire trouble;

Let someone come to help me out.

How shall I endure such torture?
I have been pierced by the arrow of love,
 what shall I do?
I can neither live, nor can I die.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 5-6, poem 3

IN LOVE DIVINE

In yet another poem on the theme of love, Bullah gives a graphic description of the state of one who finds himself in that condition. Such a one loses all consciousness of his own existence. And, the experience of merging in the Beloved is indescribable, just as the sweet taste of jaggery¹ cannot be described by a dumb person.

The lover is constantly afraid of losing sight of his Beloved. His eyes ever pursue the eyes of his Beloved.

Although love is beset with difficulties, and is entailed with suffering, the lover is never prepared to give it up. In fact, love makes him bold, and he becomes emancipated from the fear of public opinion. Addressing his Divine Beloved, Bullah pleads to Him to be merciful. He is in love with Him in whatever form He appears—"You make me dance in all Your forms."

In the last but one stanza, Bullah describes the efforts he has made to reach the Beloved. He withdraws his soul current from the nine outlets to the tenth to behold Him—"I have closed my nine doors to sleep; and I have come to stand at the tenth."

In the last stanza Bullah poses a question to the Beloved. He wants to know if He also loves him or if it is only from his side—"Am I also somewhat dear to you, or am I alone a sacrifice unto you."

Main vich main na raih gai rai

Not an iota of self is left in me,
Ever since I fell in love with the Beloved.

1. An Indian sweet.

When union with the Beloved is attained,
 It is like the taste of jaggery to the dumb.
 I find neither head nor foot of my own.
 None other than Him created this "I".
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

The eyes have become slaves of eyes.¹
 They behold You from hundreds of miles.
 Every moment they pursue You out of fear².
 You have offered some bait to charm them !
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

Now I have set my abode in the Oneness;
 And I dwell there in ceaseless wonder.
 Life, birth and death are all effaced !
 Not a bit of my sense and wit remains.
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

I had thought love was easy;
 It is turbulent as the flow of four streams.
 It flares up in flames, it freezes to ice.
 The fire of separation ever consumes me !
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

Loud, fast beat the drums of love.
 Lovers are ever drawn towards them.
 Strings of shame have cracked and broken.
 Free from shame are the love-struck.
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

Stop, stop, Dear, enough is enough !
 Love for You sustains my heart.
 None is mine other than You,
 Mother nor father, sister nor brother.
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

1. My eyes have become slaves of Your eyes.
 2. Out of fear of losing sight of You.

Sometimes You go and sit in the sky;
 Sometimes You suffer the pain of this world;
 Sometimes You take on the garb of a Master.
 You make me dance in all Your forms.
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

In Your separation lies my closet;
 I pass my days in much suffering.
 Sometimes incline to me, to You I plead.
 I am a sacrifice unto You.
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

For Your sake I have become thus :
 I have closed my nine doors to sleep;
 And I have come to stand at the tenth.
 O, accept my love for You sometimes !
 Not an iota of self is left in me.

O, Spouse of Bullah, I am a sacrifice unto You !
 I am a customer for a sight of Your face.
 Am I also somewhat dear to You,
 Or am I alone a sacrifice unto You ?

Not an iota of self is left in me.
 Ever since I fell in love with the Beloved.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 289-292, poem 134

LIFT YOUR VEIL !

This beautiful poem is addressed by Bullah to his Master as well as to the Lord. The esoteric significance of the poem written in a state of intense love and gratitude to Inayat Shah is that the Master is the manifest form of the Lord, or that the Lord is concealed behind the facade of the Master. Bullah implores his Master to let the world know who he really is—"Lift your veil, My Beloved!" and not to keep it in darkness.

A number of lines in the poem show that there is lack of visible reciprocation on the part of the Master to the love of his disciple. But, this does not really mean that Inayat Shah was indifferent to the intense love that Bullah had for him. This, in fact, only underlines the intensity of Bullah's love, which is expressed in the language of complaint, which lovers usually employ.

Ghungat chuk O sajjanan

Lift your veil, my Beloved !
Why do you feel bashful now ?

Your curly locks¹ entwine my heart,
They bite me like the serpents.
You do not pity my sad plight,
You look at me with blood-shot eyes.
Lift your veil, my Beloved !

You flung your arrow of two eyes,
Aimed at the breast of poor me !
Inflicting a wound, you hid your face :

1. Esoterically, locks refer to plurality of the Universe. These locks conceal the beatific face of God. Inayat, like other Sufis, kept long hair. These are grateful praises of the *Murshid*, the Master.

Who taught you such tricks, my love?
Lift your veil, my Beloved !

The dirk of separation
You aimed with such perfection,
I got disheartened, disillusioned.
You never cared to call on me,
Your promises proved so brittle !
Lift your veil, my Beloved !

With your love, O dear,
You captured my heart.
Never later you showed your face.
This cup of poison I drank myself,
I was indeed an unripe innocent.
Lift your veil, my Beloved !

O king Inayat, these are not empty words,
I sorely look for you on every side.
Steady all through, how can I waver?
Even today I am true to my word.

Lift your veil, my Beloved!
Why do you feel bashful now?

Abdul Majid Bhatti, Kafian Bulleh Shah, pp. 222-224

LONGING

This poem is suffused with longing and love for the Beloved. It is symbolic of the love of the seeker for the Lord as also of the love of the disciple for his Master. An incident occurred in the life of Bullah, when his Master, Inayat Shah, got annoyed with him, and exiled him from his presence. Bullah could bear this separation no longer, so he disguised himself as a dancing girl and joined the troupe that was to sing and dance at some function (Qawwali) that would be attended by Shah Inayat.

During the performance Bullah danced with abandon and sang such soulful songs of pleading with the Beloved until Shah Inayat, who had pretended not to recognize him, asked him if he was Bullah. He replied that he was *bhulla* (which means the fallen one and is a pun on the name of Bullah). Shah Inayat was so pleased with Bullah's love and humility that he forgave him and lovingly embraced him.

The last stanza of the lyric suggests that the poem was written on that occasion.

Akkhan vich dil jani pyaria

In my eyes, my precious, my darling,
What a longing have you aroused !

Between You and me there is no distance;
But You have concealed yourself from me.
The buffaloes have come, but dear Ranjha has not;
The flames of His separation have consumed me.
In my eyes, my precious, my darling,
What a longing have you aroused !

I am near, why do you tell me You are far?
 O, You have concealed yourself from me!
 In the bazaars of Egypt, in the manner of Zulaikha,
 You have lifted Your veil and brought me to ruin.
 In my eyes, my precious, my darling,
 What a longing have you aroused!

O my Master, with a veil over my head,
 Your love has made Bullah dance.¹

In my eyes, my precious, my darling,
 What a longing have you aroused!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat. p. 24, poem 13

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1. This line suggests that the lyric was composed to assuage the feelings of annoyance of Shah Inayat with Bulleh Shah.

LONGING FOR THE MASTER

This poem is surcharged with love and longing of Bulleh Shah for his Master. All pleasures of the world appear insipid to him, because his Master is away. All his interest is centered in seeing his Master return to him.

On hearing the discourses of his Master, the pull of *Nam* becomes so strong in him that it shoots through him like a shaft. This leads him to the spiritual practice of concentrating his soul current and withdrawing it to the eye center in the arch of the forehead.

The last stanza suggests that Bulleh Shah has achieved his goal and his heart is overwhelmed with joy.

Ab kyon sajan chir layo re ?

Why have you taken so long, my Love?

What so came into my mind,

That I forgot all joys and sorrows?

I flung into fire my jewelry,

You enkindled such a blaze in my heart !

Why have you taken so long, my Love?

Hearing such words of wisdom from saints,

The shaft of *Nam* has struck me a mortal blow.

I cry like a *koel* night after night,

Still you feel no compassion for me !

Why have you taken so long, my Love?

The muezzin of love has given his call;

It is meet that I attend to it fast.

Prostrating oft I turn towards home,
 With forehead adorned with the arch.¹
 Why have you taken so long, my Love?

Strange are the ways of the City of Love?
 Bloodstained eyes are cups of pleasure.
 I have myself got entangled in the snare;
 And have willingly got myself slaughtered.
 Why have you taken so long, my Love?

Bullah has fallen in love with the Beloved;
 Each bride comes adorned and embellished.
 On beholding my Beloved Shah Inayat,
 My heart is charmed and beguiled, as ever.

Why have you taken so long, my Love?

Abdul Majid Bhatti, Kafian Bulleh Shah, pp. 16-18

1. To return to the true home by withdrawing the soul current to the third eye in the arch of the forehead.

LOST IN LOVE

This short *kafi* is replete with esoteric meaning. Bullah says that he has realized his true self by shedding his ego. This has enabled him to get over the false sense of individuation or separateness from God. He has succeeded in uniting with the Lord and sees Him pervading everywhere.

Ab ham aise gum hue

I have got lost in the city of love,
I am trying to know my self.

I cannot lay my hands on the substance.

I have rid myself of ego,
And discovered my true self.

All indeed has ended well.

O Bullah, I find the Lord pervades both worlds,
None now appears a stranger to me.

I have got lost in the city of love,

I am trying to know my self.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 16

LOST TO MYSELF

This beautiful poem depicts the state of complete absorption of the lover in the Beloved. The lover completely loses his separate identity, and his actions bespeak of a mad man's behavior to people of the world. Once the Lord has been realized within, He is seen to pervade everywhere—"From head to foot You are there, and You too are within and without."

Such a state gives a sense of complete freedom from all constraints—"I am now free from bondage of this bank and that; there is neither a river nor a boat."

The God-man says what He makes him utter—"Dear Mansur exclaimed, 'I am the Truth.' Say, who made him utter this?" God himself is the lover of one who completely merges himself in Him.

Mainun kih hoyā hun maithon gai guati main

What has happened to me?

I am now lost to myself!

I look within me and I do not find myself.

Within myself You abide.

From head to foot You are there,

And You too are within and without.

I am now free from bondage of this bank and that;

There is neither a river, nor a boat.

Dear Mansur exclaimed, "I am the Truth".

Say, who made him utter this?

O Bullah, the Spouse is the lover of one,

Who merges his self into Him.

What has happened to me?

I am now lost to myself.

Faqr Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 270, poem 124

LOVE AND LAW

Love and law are quite alien to each other. "Love knows no laws," is a well-known saying. Bulleh Shah, in this lyric, sings of the intoxicated state of one who has drunk the cup of love. The lover becomes oblivious of all except his Beloved, and becomes impervious to the gibes and taunts of others.

In the second stanza Bullah says that the Lord pervades everywhere, and in the third stanza he says that the Master abides within us. Taking the two stanzas together, it can be inferred that the Lord and the Master (*Murshid*) are one. The latter is only the manifest form of the former.

All pedantic knowledge of logic and grammar and all rituals and observances of prayers and fasts are of no avail on the path of love. For, the lover is inebriated with the love of his Beloved.

Bullah ends the lyric by saying that he has become tongue-tied in the presence of his Beloved. The intensity of His presence has driven away all thoughts from the mind of the onlooker, except the desire to look at Him.

Ni main hun sunya ishq shara kih nata

O friends, it is now that I learn,
How love and law are related.

By drinking a cup of love,
All things are forgotten!
In every house abides the Lord!
I find Him pervading one and all.

Within us abides our *Murshid*.
When I fell in love, I learnt this.

My logic, my grammar, my polemics,
All my knowledge proved futile.

With prayers, with fasts, what has he to do,
The one intoxicated with the wine of love?
The erudition of pundits,
The scholarship of mullahs proved futile.
None of them get at the secret !

Little does he know the worth of silks,
The one who spins only coarse cloth.
Sitting in the presence of the Beloved,
Bullah has become mute and dumb !

O friends, it is now that I learn,
How love and law are related.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 304-305, poem 140

LOVE CHARMS

This is one of the shortest but most powerful of Bulleh Shah's poems. The lyric is surcharged with emotion, the graph of which rises rapidly to touch the zenith. Unlike the larger poems where the thought develops and its different shades are exhibited in detail, this poem portrays a single sentiment which grows in strength with each succeeding verse. For unity of effect the poem is unsurpassed.

The poem suggests that the spouse of a young woman has got into the clutches of her rival, and the wife is in a greatly agitated state of mind. In order to win back her husband she resolves to employ all the charms and spells of magic that she knows. She would use the thunder and lightning of clouds, the rays of the moon, the sun, and the stars and her own embellishment and adornment as counters to work in her game of love, and change the situation to her advantage. The lover seems to proclaim that all is fair in love and war. The beloved must be won back at all costs, be it by charms or fires or storms. Such expressions just sweep the reader off his feet. The poem runs with great ease and vigour; its flow and force are simply enchanting.

Ik tuna

I shall sing a wondrous charm;
I shall coax my offended friend.

This charm I shall read and blow,
And light the fire with rays of the sun.
With collyrium in my eyes,
The sky overcast with dark clouds,
With my eyebrows I shall work a storm.

The seven seas asleep in my heart,
 I shall stir into a furious storm.
 I shall burst into a fierce flash of lightning;
 My furious thunder will prove startling.

With love as furnace, stars as *harmal*,¹
 I shall make the moon as shroud.
 On the footpath to the Transcendent,
 I shall sit and play on the conch.
 I shall sleep with my Lord, clasped to His neck;
 For then alone I shall be called His spouse.

I shall sing a wondrous charm,
 I shall coax my offended friend.

Nazir Ahmad, kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p.11

1. The name of a plant, the seeds of which are burnt, supposedly to drive away evil spirits.

LOVE CONSUMMATED

Unlike most other poems on love, in which Bulleh Shah has an attitude of complaint, this one is written in a mood of gratitude. It does not deal with the pain of separation, but with the joy of union and the delight of listening to the divine music of the flute. This consummation he has achieved through his Master, Inayat Shah, to whom he pays tribute in the very first stanza—"The unstruck melody of the flute fascinates. I have now found the throne of Lahore."¹

The ecstasy that emanates from this divine union is blissful—"All my dirt and dross stands burnt. . . Now the cup of bliss has fallen in my hands. . . The whole world now shines brightly." The desire for union is no longer an empty hope, but an actual realization—"No longer do I rely on the snare of hope. O Bullah, the Lord has come right unto me. All my wishes have now been granted."

Mere ghar aya piya hamra

To my house has come my Lord.

What an uproar the Unity has produced!
The unstruck melody of the flute fascinates.
I have now found the throne of Lahore.
To my house has come my Lord.

All my dirt and dross stand burnt.
I am struck by the blow of true love.
Now I abide under the shelter of my Lord.
To my house has come my Lord.

1. Refers to Inayat Shah, Bulleh Shah's Master, in his radiant form.

No more do I struggle for union with Him.
Now the cup of bliss has fallen in my hands.
Now I forget the existence of my being.
To my house has come my Lord.

Now I am free from all accounting,
For the Beloved has cast a glance on me.
The whole world now shines brightly.
To my house has come my Lord.

No longer do I rely on the snare of hope.
O Bullah, the Lord has come right unto me,
All my wishes have now been granted.
To my house has come my Lord.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 257-258, poem 116

MELODY OF THE FLUTE

There is a profound mystic significance behind the symbolism of the flute, usually associated with Lord Krishna. Here Bulleh Shah has combined it with that of Ranjha, whose image with the flute is also well-known. The music of the flute refers to the unstruck melody of a high spiritual region inside. Everyone talks of the music of the flute, remarks Bullah, but only that rare one understands it, who listens to the unstruck melody within himself.

Whoever works for spiritual realization, attains it—“Whosoever sought it, surely found it.” Only, one has to persevere and work in the right direction. Although various can be the notes in the music played, there is a single strain—unstruck melody—which runs through them all—“One strain breathes through them all.”

In the last stanza Bullah reminds that the Lord is not far from us, if we do not lose contact with the Word—“Keep ye up your trade steady with the Word.” The Master will then take care of us in times of crisis such as death, if contact with the Word is retained.

Bansi achraj kahan bajai

Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!¹

O, Lord of the flute, cowherd Ranjha,

You are in tune with the whole wide world.

You rejoice but I am drowned in dire misery.

Pray, harmonize my tune with that of yours,

Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!

1. Esoterically, music of the flute is audible at a high spiritual stage within. Rumi commences his great *Masnavi* from this stage. Its opening line is: “Listen to the flute as it narrates its tale, and complains of separation from its source.”

O flute-player, You are called the Lord.
 You reveal the peerless cosmic beauty,
 Albeit You remain unseen by eyes.
 What a mysterious game You play!
 Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!

Everyone hears and talks of the flute,
 Rare is the one who understands its meaning.
 Whosoever attains the unstruck melody,
 He becomes enamored of the flute.
 Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!

On hearing the sonorous notes of the flute,
 I shriek with joy in the manner of peacocks.
 I rejoice in its variegated tunes;
 A single note lies behind the entire symphony!
 Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!

This flute has a lengthy account.¹
 Whosoever sought it, surely found it.
 Simple² is the strain of this flute;
 From Existence Absolute it gave birth to attributes.³
 Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!

This flute has five to seven stops;
 Each stop has its distinctive note,
 But one strain breathes through them all.
 It is this strain which has bewitched me.
 Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!

O Bullah, all my troubles have blown over.
 The Beloved has come and stands at the door.
 Keep ye up your trade, steady with the word,
 Then your Master will stand as your witness.⁴

Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute.!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 46-48, poem 28

1. Refers to the wide expanse of the Word.

2. Simple means non-dual.

3. Three attributes from which the entire creation came into being.

4. At the court of the Dispenser of Justice, the Negative Power, the Master will be your savior.

MERGING IN THE BELOVED

In the intensity of love, the lover loses his identity in that of his beloved. In this short lyric, Bullah describes his state in the love for his Master. He also compares himself to Majnun, who had merged his own being in that of his beloved, Laila.

In the last stanza he shows his unconcern with the taunts of people, as his Beloved has come to him, and he cares for nothing else.

Piya piya karte hamin piya hue

Repeating the name of the Beloved,
I have become the Beloved myself;¹
Whom shall I call the Beloved now?

Separation and union—I give up both,
Whom should I belong to now?
Like Majnun, the mad one in love,
Become Laila yourself.

O Bullah, the Beloved has come to my house,
Why should I now suffer the taunts of others?

Repeating the name of the Beloved,
I have become the Beloved myself;
Whom shall I call the Beloved now?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 66, poem 39.

1. A similar statement is made by Jesus Christ in the Bible: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (St. John 14:20)

MERGING IN RANJHA

This *kafi* is one of the best known *kafis* of Bulleh Shah. Its language is simple but surcharged with emotion.

Mansur had loudly proclaimed, "I am the Truth," and long after his departure the world came to accept the truth of his claim. But this was an occurrence of a long past age and of an old culture. Heer, on the other hand, is a simple woman of a Punjab village. She had not studied the intricacies of philosophy, nor familiarized herself with the ways of piety and abstinence before finding them both barren and sterile. Right from the beginning, she had taken to the path of love, and learnt only one word 'fidelity'. Because of this she was impervious to the fear of slander and ill fame. Leaving all other thoughts aside, repeating the name of Ranjha and proclaiming "I am Ranjha," she reached the same stage which Mansur had reached earlier.

In support of her union with Ranjha she says that a man's essence is whatever dwells in his heart. Since Ranjha alone abided in her heart, so she was not separate from Ranjha. She was not other than he.

For those who are extra cautious on the path of love, Heer says that reproof and reproach are the necessary concomitants of love, and a true lover should not care about them—"Take off your white sheet, my lass; and put on the fakir's coarse blanket. The white sheet will catch stains, the blanket will get none."

This poem effectively brings out the Sufi doctrine of "Fana and Baqa." It is only by merging his identity in the Master that the disciple can attain to the stage of everlasting communion with the Lord.

In the end, Heer desires to leave her own land and go to the land of Ranjha. For, in her own place all people

have turned against her. It signifies the longing of the soul for its true home where the Lord abides. This world is alien and unfriendly to the soul.

Ranjha Ranjha kardi

Repeating the name of Ranjha,
I have become Ranjha myself;
Let no one call me 'Heer';
Call ye me Dhidho Ranjha.¹

Ranjha is in me, I am in Ranjha;
No other thought exists in my mind.
I am not, He alone is:
He himself amuses himself.

Whatever dwells within us.
That verily is our essence;
The one with whom I have fallen in love,
I have become indeed like Him.

Take off your white sheet, my lass;
And put on the fakir's coarse blanket.²
The white sheet will catch stains,
The blanket will get none.

O Bullah, take me to Takht Hazara,³
The Syals⁴ give me no admittance.

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1. 'Dhidho' was Ranjha's nick name. He was fondly called 'Dhidho' by his clansmen.
 2. White sheet is suggestive of over-sensitiveness to worldly reproof and condemnation. The coarse blanket is suggestive of the indifference of true lovers towards such reproach.
 3. The native place of Ranjha; here it signifies the abode of the Lord.
 4. The caste to which Heer's husband belonged, here it signifies the world.

Repeating the name of Ranjha,
I have become Ranjha myself;
Let no one call me 'Heer';
Call ye me Dhidho Ranjha.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 38

MISSIVES

In the absence of the bridegroom, letters are written to him by the bride to describe the pitiable state of her mind. The analogy symbolizes the state of the disciple who leads a forlorn and miserable life in the absence of his Master.

The pain entailed in love is such that the lover can neither bear it, nor can he run away from it. It is like a chain which strongly holds him. It is a calamity full of pain—even sleep and hunger are gone—and yet the lover is not prepared to escape from it. The path of love is arduous, full of dangers and pitfalls, and yet what is attained at the end is worth much more than the price paid for it.

Patian likhan main sham nun

I write letters to my Beloved, for I do not see him.

My courtyard has become frightening;

O how shall I pass my night ?

I consult all the scholars;

I call soothsayers of the world;

Why find fault with books,

When my destiny itself is adverse ?

O brother astrologer, pray tell me the naked truth.

If I be devoid of good fortune,

You need not hide the fact.

I yearn to renounce everything,

To run away as a mendicant.

Alas, I carry the double, triple and fourfold,

Chain of love round my neck !

To which land has my sleep fled ?

Even she has turned a foe.

Would that I meet him in a dream !
O, where has fled that auspicious sleep ?

With ceaseless, doleful heartache,
My pain has become double;
My eyes refuse to shed tears;
Someone has cast on me a spell.

O Beloved, what have I gained from my love for you?
I wear a crown of thorns,
But do not find your path.

Let me take abode in the City of Love,
Where my Beloved dwells.
O Bullah, I beg of the Beloved just one favor :
Pray, cast on me but one glance !

I write letters to my Beloved, for I do not see him.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 23

MY BELOVED FRIEND

In this short cryptic poem Bullah reveals that the Lord pervades in everyone. He is to be found not only in Mansur, but also in his executioner, as also the spectator who stands aside and smiles at the spectacle. The Lord specifically reveals himself in a Master, who is none but the Lord himself in the human form.

Behad ramzan dassada ni dholan mahi

Countless secrets He reveals,
 my beloved Friend.
 He resides behind the veil of 'mim',¹
 my beloved Friend.

He takes on the garb of Mansur,
 And reveals the mystery of 'I am the Truth'.
 He makes himself die on the hangman's noose,
 And then, standing close by, he beams a smile,
 my beloved Friend.

Countless secrets He reveals,
 my beloved Friend.
 He resides behind the veil of 'mim',
 my beloved Friend.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 56, poem 33

1. The letter 'mim' (م) or 'm', occurs in Ahmad, but is missing from Ahad. Ahad means unity or the One, which stands for God. Ahmad means "the most praiseworthy," which stands for the prophet or the Master. So, the line means that God is manifest in the Master or the *Murshid*.

MY FASTS, MY PILGRIMAGES!

This delightful *kafi* is quite clear and simple. With the attainment of God-realization a radical change comes over Bullah. No longer does he perform the rituals of fasts and going on pilgrimages. Nor is he now interested in logic, learning and scholarship. He now sees the Lord pervade everywhere, after he has realized Him within himself.

Roze hajj namaz ni maye

My fasts, my pilgrimages, my prayers, O mother,
My Beloved has made me forget them all !

As soon as I realized the Beloved,
My logic, my grammar were all forgotten !
Such was the unstruck melody that He played !
My fasts, my pilgrimages, my prayers, O mother,
My Beloved has made me forget them all !

When my Beloved came to my house,
I forgot all expositions, all erudition !
In every object is He now seen,
His splendor is visible within and without;
And the deluded people know it not !

My fasts, my pilgrimages, my prayers, O mother,
My Beloved has made me forget them all !

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 39

MY MAD LOVE FOR THE BELOVED

There is a maxim, "Where there is love, there is no law." The theme of this poem is the conflict between these two. If love is sincere and profound, law has to yield. A true lover has to bear the reproaches and ridicule of people—"People reproach me time and again, I do not care to listen to them." True love survives, but it has to pay a terrible price for it.

Once union with the Beloved has been achieved, the question of believer and nonbeliever becomes irrelevant—"From the housetops people proclaim me a disbeliever. They label me as an infidel. I find no believer or disbeliever, ever since I entered the Unity."

We are wedded to evil, taking the Negative Power as our Lord. We have to free ourselves from his clutches and attach ourselves to God—"I am most fortunate to have killed my false husband (mind) . . . I am now in union with my Beloved." In true love, false shame and fear of reproach disappear—"In the garden have I laid my bed, I sleep with him, pressed against his breast."

Mae na murda ishq diwana

Mother, my mad love does not leave me,
Ever since I lost my heart to the Beloved.

There was a wager between love and law.
I played the bet with all my skill.
People reproach me time and again,
I do not care to listen to them.
"In the courtyard the Devil¹ dances,
Beware of it and keep it in leash."

1. People taunt me by saying that within me resides the Devil. They consider me an infidel.

Breaking the law, I won the game,
 I walk disgraced in peoples' eyes.
 I was immature, I was lost in childish games,
 I was playing with toys of clay.
 These games now appear to be stupid,
 After I have come to my Lord's house.

I clap my hands, dancing a jig with my friends,
 While the Beloved peeps at me stealthily.
 Say, why does he feel bashful?
 Why does he not disclose his secret?

From housetops people proclaim me a disbeliever,
 They label me as an infidel.
 I find no believer or disbeliever
 Ever since I entered the Unity.

I have burnt my bodice and my veil,
 And set on fire my hut, igniting unbelief.
 Placing my head on my palm,
 I have driven out disbelief from my heart.
 I am most fortunate to have killed
 my false husband (mind),¹
 By making him drink poison (nectar)²
 with my own hands.

I am now in union with my Beloved,
 Having lost all sense of shame and reproach.
 In the garden have I laid my bed,
 I sleep with him, pressed against his breast.
 My heart and body are joined to his, O Bullah,
 And the Beloved is firmly secured.

Mother, my mad love does not leave me,
 Ever since I lost my heart to the Beloved.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 233-234, poem 107

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1. Mind, the agent of the Negative Power, which holds the soul under its sway.
 2. The Nectar of the Name of God which redeems the soul, proves fatal for the evil tendencies of the mind.

MY MAGNIFICENT BRIDEGROOM

Paying a handsome tribute to the Lord--“How magnificent is my Bridegroom!”, Bulleh Shah reminds us that we do not take proper steps to realize Him in this life. Instead, we waste our time and energy in empty rituals or pedantic learning--“Unconcerned with the hereafter, you keep studying books.”

The fourth, fifth and sixth lines depict a perverse state of affairs, in which the good ones suffer and the wicked thrive--“The truthful get shoe-beating, the liars revel in wanton play. The good ones are kept at arm’s length.” In such conditions, says, Bullah, he dare not speak out the truth, for no one would listen to him--“O Bullah, if I were to speak out now, who would listen to me?”

Mere naushauh da kit mol

How magnificent is my Bridegroom!

Unconcerned with the hereafter,
You keep studying books.

The truthful get shoe-beating;
The liars revel in wanton play.

The good ones are kept at arm’s length.

We too had been faultless in our native state.

O Bullah, if I were to speak out now,
Who would listen to me?

How magnificent is my Bridegroom!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 259, poem 117

MY SPINNING WHEEL OUT OF ORDER

The spinning wheel stands for the human frame and the ironsmith for the spiritual guide or the Master. The lovelorn girl represents the soul, pining for union with the Lord. 'Spinning' signifies meditation, and without the proper guidance of the Master, proper meditation or spiritual practice is not possible.

As elsewhere, the analogy of the spinning wheel has been used to great effect by Bulleh Shah in this *kafi*. The various defects of the spinning wheel signify the various obstacles that come in the way of spiritual practice. And, just as the defects in the spinning wheel can be removed only by a competent ironsmith, so also the obstacles on the spiritual path can only be overcome through the guidance of a perfect Master. Ranjha stands for the Lord here, whereas Heer signifies the aspiring soul.

The second stanza gives a vivid account of the intense yearning of the soul for her Lord. The last few lines strike a happy note. Says Bullah, "I shall deem to have spun a hundred maunds, if the Beloved were to clasp me to his heart."

Dhilak gayi charkhe di hathhi

The handle of the spinning wheel has slipped down;
I can now spin no more !

The spindle has got many a bend;
Who would now call the ironsmith ?
Straighten out the spindle, O ironsmith;
The thread¹ gets broken again and again.

1. The thread of attention so essential for proper meditation.

Every now and then it swings;
It does not produce a single hank of yarn.

There is no tape to fix the wheel with;
Its net of threads needs to be stretched tight.
The leather pieces are without any grease.
The band of the wheel begins to wobble.
The handle of the spinning wheel has slipped down;
I can now spin no more !

When will this day pass, the sun is still high?¹
When shall I see my Beloved again ?
My Love has gone to graze the buffaloes;
Who can have any interest in spinning ?
Wherever my Love is, there go my eyes;
My heart runs to the pastures.
My friends call me for the spinning party.

His separation has stirred a storm within.
I entreat you to come immediately and meet me,
Whatever excuse you may have to coin.
I shall deem to have spun a hundred maunds,
O Bullah,
If the Beloved were to clasp me to his heart !
When will the day pass, the sun is still high ?
When shall I see my Beloved again ?

The handle of the spinning wheel has slipped down;
I can now spin no more !

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 37

1. When will this life end, so that I may be united with my Lord ?

MYSTERY OF ALIF

This *kafi* deals with one of Bulleh Shah's favorite subjects, the reality and unity of God.

Knowledge is vast in its scope. But, the seeker after Truth need not go beyond learning the first letter *Alif*. This letter signifies Allah or God. Various reasons have been given by commentators for ascribing this meaning to the letter *Alif*. For one thing, it is the first letter in the word 'Allah'. For another, it points upwards like the finger of a witness, that is, it points towards God. Thirdly, the form of *Alif* resembles the figure one (1), so it points to the oneness of God.

The poem says that creation started from the One, but it multiplied into countless numbers. To know the One, all book-learning and erudition is in vain. It achieves nothing except confusion about the nature of the One.

In the third stanza, Bullah has a dig at the orthodox priests, who commit to memory the whole of the holy *Qura'n* and recite it to perfection, but whose mind is engulfed in worldly desires and passions. It wanders like a mad man and does not become motionless even for a moment.

In the last stanza Bullah speaks of immortality of the soul and its transmigration. He gives the example of a banyan tree, which starts its life from a single small seed. It grows and spreads to cover a wide area, but in the end it dies and only seeds remain. The soul takes the form of a body, which grows in size in course of time, and gets involved in extensive worldly interests. Ultimately, however, it has to give up all its material possessions including its body, to regain its pristine glory as pure soul.

Ik alif parho chhutkara ei

Deliverance lies in learning but one *Alif*.¹

One *Alif* became two, three and four.
The very same one multiplied into millions,
And then it grew into countless multitudes.
The mystery of one *Alif* is unique!
Deliverance lies in learning but one *Alif*.

Why do you read cartloads of books,
And carry on your head a bundle of troubles?
You look awful, like an executioner;
The journey ahead is most arduous!
Deliverance lies in learning but one *Alif*.

You commit to memory the whole of the *Qura'n*;
You recite it ceaselessly, you recite it to perfection;
But you fix your attention on worldly gifts;
Your mind roams as does a wandering postman.
Deliverance lies in learning but one *Alif*.

O Bullah, the seed of a banyan tree was sown;
The tree then grew, and it expanded.
When the tree became old and perished,
Only seeds were left behind.²

Deliverance lies in learning but one *Alif*.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 20-21, poem 11

1. The first letter of the Arabic/Persian/Urdu alphabet.

2. *Alif* signifies the unity behind all multiplicity; the tree likewise starts with one seed and would need only one seed to grow into a tree again.

NEITHER HINDU NOR MUSLIM

This *kafi* depicts the state of one, who has realized God within himself, and who then sees God abide in everyone. He transcends the narrow considerations of castes, creeds, nations, religious dogmas and the like. The first line of this poem reminds us of the statement of Guru Nanak, when he proclaimed after his crucial mystic experience in the river Bein: "There is no Hindu, there is no Musalman."

All truly realized souls rise above the differences which divide men. They also rise above the level of morals—differences between good and bad, right and wrong. Moreover, they become impervious to daily biological needs—"I am neither hungry, nor satiated; I am neither naked, nor am I covered." They are not easily emotionally affected—"I do not weep, I do not laugh." They make no difference between their own and that of others, between 'mine' and 'thine', and feel everywhere at home. And, yet they feel alien in this world, because it is not their real home—"I am not settled, I am not homeless." And, since they see the same Lord within all, they follow the path of universal goodwill—"I take to the path of amity for all."

The above description of the self applies to the soul and not to the body or the mind. In the state of ultimate self-realization, the self is identified with the soul. The soul transcends all the distinctions mentioned above. These distinctions are relevant only in the regions of the body and the mind.

Hindu nahin, na Mussalman

I am neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim.¹

I sit in the spinning bee² forsaking pride.

I am neither a *Sunni*, nor a *Shia* ;

I take to the path of amity for all.

I am neither hungry, nor satiated;

I am neither naked, nor am I covered.

I do not weep, I do not laugh.

I am not settled, I am not homeless.

I am neither a sinner, nor a saint;

I know not the path of vice and virtue.

O Bullah ! if in the heart dwells the Lord,

One would renounce both Hindu and Muslim.

I am neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 83

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1. cf. What counsel do you give, O Muslims, for I do not know myself?
I am neither a Christian, nor a Jew, nor a Zoroastrian, nor a Muslim.

چہرہ تدبیر اے مسلماناں کہ من خودی لانی دانم۔ نہ ترساؤ نہ یہودی ام نہ، نہ یرو نہ مسلمانم

Masnavi, Rumi.

2. The gathering of lovers of God, where the thread of God's Name is spun.

NO RELIANCE ON YOU

This is yet another poem of Bulleh Shah on one of his favorite themes. No dependence can be put by the lovers of God on Him. There is always the fear of the playful Beloved becoming indifferent.

The poem enumerates several great lovers of God, who had to pay a heavy price for their love for Him. Abraham was thrown on a burning pyre. King Solomon was obliged to lead the life of a destitute. Jonah was made to be swallowed by a whale. Yusuf was auctioned in the bazaars of Egypt. Zacharias' head was cut with a saw. Job's body was made food for worms. Shams of Tabriz was skinned alive. Hussain, the grandson of prophet Mohammed, was made to die of thirst. The head of John the Baptist was severed with a sword.

After giving this long list of martyrs in the name of God, Bullah ends the poem by stating that he now recognizes the Lord in all His guises. However else He may appear to others, He cannot conceal himself from Bullah. For the Lord himself is manifest in all His lovers.

Bharvasa kih ashnai da

What confidence can I have in Your love?
There is always the fear of Your indifference.

You put Abraham on a burning pyre.
You made Solomon light an oven.
You got Jonah swallowed by a whale.
And, You had Yusuf sold in Egypt.
What confidence can I have in Your love?

You had Zacharias' head cut with a saw.
You made Job's body food for worms.
You got Suna'n to wear a belt on his neck.

And, some You made to be skinned alive.
What confidence can I have in Your love?

You made the Prophet emanate light,
And You gave that Patriarch the name Hussain,¹
Whom Gabriel himself rocked in a cradle.
And, then, You got the thirsty one¹
killed with a sword.

What confidence can I have in Your love?

You made Zacharias hide in the hollow;
Then, You took his hiding amiss;
And, You got a saw hurled on his head,
As a tree is cut with the smith's pincers.
What confidence can I have in Your love?

John² came to be known as Your friend;
For You alone he was inflamed with love.
You showed him the way of religious laws,
And, You got his head severed with a sword.
What confidence can I have in Your love?

O Bullah, I see the Lord now in His true form;
I recognize Him in whatever shape He comes.
I identify Him wherever He comes and goes,
Now He will never conceal himself from me.

What confidence can I have in Your love?
There is always the fear of Your indifference.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 51-53, poem 30

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1. This refers to Hussain, a grandson of prophet Mohammed.
 2. John the Baptist.

OF EARTH

The physical body of man, as also all his possessions are made of earth. This means that they are all ephemeral, passing. All the events in man's life are seen as a phantom show by Bullah. They have neither substance nor permanence.

When a man comes to possess much wealth, in his folly he becomes haughty and egotistic—"The earth with much earth over it, is the earth full of pride."

Nothing that is physical and material is free from the disease of decay and transience. The glory of spring flowers is all too fleeting.

In the last stanza Bullah again reminds us emphatically that in the fun and frolic of our lives we are liable to forget the fact of death, which is always looming large before us—"That which laughed and played became earth again. It now sleeps with legs outstretched." If this truth is kept before the mind, no room would be left for pride and insolence.

Mati kudam karendi yar

Earth makes us swagger, O friend !

The apparel is of earth,

The steed is of earth ;

Of earth is the rider.

The earth makes the earth flee ;

Of earth is all clamor.

Earth makes us swagger, O friend !

Earth is at war with earth ;

Of earth are all weapons made.

The earth with much earth over it,

Is the earth full of pride.

Earth makes us swagger, O friend !

Of earth is the garden, of earth the orchard,
Of earth is all glory of flowers.
Earth has come to look at earth ;
Of earth comes the season of spring.
Earth makes us swagger, O friend !

That which laughed and played became earth again.
It now sleeps with legs outstretched.
O Bullah, if you were to solve this riddle,
You would cast aside your ego and pride.

Earth makes us swagger, O friend !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 235-236, Poem 108

ON UNION WITH THE LORD

All sorrows vanish on meeting the Lord. Employing the usual analogy of Heer and Ranjha, Bullah conveys that the world does not understand the true greatness of the Master. For the world Ranjha is a cowherd, but for Heer, he is the supreme Lord himself. The world regards Inayat Shah as a mere vegetable-grower, but for Bullah he is the ultimate Divine Being.

The last lines of the poem say that He is neither near nor far. He is not near, because it is difficult to realize Him. He is not far, for He resides right within us.

Mahi ve tain milyan sab dukh hovan dur

O my Love, on meeting You all my sorrows vanish !

For the people You are a cowherd and a servant.

For me You are my Lord, my Forgiver.

O my Love, on meeting You all my sorrows vanish !

For the sake of meeting whom

My eyes have shed incessant tears,

I have seen Him in His effulgent light,

And gone are my days of separation.

O my Love, on meeting You all my sorrows vanish !

I have now realized His mystery, O Bullah !

He is neither near nor far.

O my Love, on meeting You all my sorrows vanish !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 232. poem 106

ONLY RANJHA

The love of the disciple for his Master—of Bulleh Shah for Shah Inayat—is symbolized by the love of Heer for Ranjha in this poem. It is also symbolic of the love of the soul for the Lord, in which case it is primeval, and existed before creation came into being. There is none like his Master for a devoted disciple, and he would be ready to go to any length to please his Master.

The last stanza reveals the profound truth that the Lord and the Master are one. The only difference between them is that the Lord assumes the human form in the Master. He thus enkindles His love in the heart of the disciple, and leads him back to his eternal Home.

Ik Ranjha mainun lorida

The only one I long for is Ranjha !

My love for him is older than creation ;¹

And our love was not a secret affair.

The only one I long for is Ranjha !

Himself he goes to graze the buffaloes ;

Why does he send me back from the pasture ?

The only one I long for is Ranjha !

There is no one like Ranjha to me !

I call him back with repeated prayers.

The only one I long for is Ranjha !

The proud ones have ravishing eyes ;

And crimson is the fair girl's wrapper.²

The only one I long for is Ranjha !

1. cf. "There was not the semblance of the two worlds, when our love existed"—Hafiz.

2. In these two lines the poet suggests that many seekers are proud of their piety and meditation, but I have nothing except love to my credit.

There is no difference between *Ahad* and *Ahmad*,
 O Bullah,
 There is just the little secret of a turn of the pen.¹

The only one I long for is Ranjha !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 18, poem 9

1. In writing *Ahad* and *Ahmad* in Urdu, there is needed just a little turn of pen. Its significance is that there is no real difference between the Master and God.

PAIN OF LOVE

As intense is the pain of separation from the Beloved, so is the joy of union with Him. In this lyric, Bullah describes the pain of separation. Every pore of the body aches like a wound. Every night of the lover is a sleepless night. It is passed in shedding tears and pining for union with Him. The lover would do anything to please her Beloved, but she does not know what would please Him. In a reminiscent mood, the lover remembers those first moments, when the Beloved captured her heart. It all started casually, but took a serious turn later.

The poem suggests that there is a fear in the lover's mind about some of her actions causing annoyance to the Beloved. In the last few lines the poet entreats the Beloved to come back. In return he would sacrifice to the Beloved his all—body, mind, wealth, and life.

Eh dukh ja kahun kis age

To whom shall I tell my suffering ?
In every pore is a wound of separation
from the Beloved.

I passed the night gasping and sobbing ;
My Beloved knows not my poignant pain.
How to find what pleases my Lord ?
I spent the night in ceaseless crying ;
Starting in fun I was caught in the snare ;
Death and public jeers are my lot.
Daily I solicit His attention to me.
Who else is going to offer me solace ?
Beloved, why have you forsaken me ?
To the one whose Beloved has gone abroad,
Why do people bring their worldly woes ?

My Beloved has not come back yet,
To whom shall I go and tell my pain ?
Says Bullah, "Come home, Love !
Even if for a moment's bliss.
I shall sacrifice mine all for You,
My body, my mind, my wealth, my life !"

To whom shall I tell my suffering ?
In every pore is a wound of separation
from the Beloved.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 36-37. poem 23

PANGS OF LOVE

The inherent pain in love for the Lord is the theme of this lyric. Bullah gives various similes to describe it. It is like getting fried in a pan. It is like getting struck by a spark of fire. It is like getting pierced by a thorn in the heart. And it is like an arrow sticking in the body, which no effort can ever remove.

Such love—with all the pain involved in it—has been there in the soul ever since the world was created and it separated from the Beloved. And this divine love stands in a class by itself, for it cannot be combined with any earthly love.

Ni mainun lagra ishq awwal da

O girls, love was implanted in me from the beginning,
From the beginning, from the day of eternity!

It fries me again and again in a pan,
And fries again what is already fried.

The already dead it crucifies again.
The already bound it again binds.

Like a spark in the straw it sets me afire.
Like a sharp thorn it pierces my heart.

The arrow of love is stuck in my heart;
It does not move despite all shaking.

O Bullah, unique is my love for the Lord!
Its shade and color stand apart.

O girls, love was implanted in me from the beginning,
From the beginning, from the day of eternity!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 302-303, poem 139

PASS YOUR TIME IN SILENCE!

In this *kafi*, as in some others, Bulleh Shah tenders advice to keep silent if one has to avoid unpleasant situations. For, truth is not to the liking of people in general. They cannot bear to hear the truth, and they would readily pick up a quarrel with the truthful.

The only exception to this general rule is the lover. To him truth is not only dear, but also he cannot restrain himself from speaking it out. And he has often to pay a heavy price for speaking out truth, as, for instance, Mansur had to do.

Truth and ritualism are antagonistic to each other. Truth does not care for any false show and external observances of orthodox religion. From within the lover's heart, truth comes out like a waft of fragrance. The lover rejects the world as something illusive or delusive.

Bulleh Shah, in the concluding stanza, once again emphatically proclaims that the experience of ultimate Reality transcends the ritualistic and the ethical levels of religion.

Chup kar ke karin guzare nun

Pass your time by keeping silent.

People can't bear to hear the Truth,
 You speak the Truth and they pounce on you.
 They hate to sit by the truthful,
 Truth tastes sweet but to the lover.
 Pass your time by keeping silent.

Truth is destructive of all rituals,
 It brings joy to the house of the lover.

Truth builds a neat new colony,
 After undoing the city of rituals.
 Pass your time by keeping silent.

Silence cannot restrain the lover,
 He has known the fragrance of Truth,
 He offers the garland of union to the Beloved.
 Leave this world of illusion alone,
 Pass your time by keeping silent.

Bulleh Shah now utters the naked Truth;
 He reveals the essence of *tariqat*¹ and *shariat*.²
 He unfolds the secret of the fourth Realm,³
 After he has undone the city of rituals.

Pass your time by keeping silent.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 104-105, poem 54

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1. The ethical aspect of religion.
 2. The ritualistic aspect of religion.
 3. The ultimate Reality. The region beyond the three attributes has generally been called the 'fourth region' or the 'fourth state' by the mystics of the East.

PERFECT LOVE

Perfect love puts the lover in a state of ecstasy and bliss. He becomes impervious to the joys and sorrows of the world. For the people of the world such a one appears to be crazy and off his head, and yet he is not only self-sufficient, but also earns an honorable place in the court of the Beloved. With the mystic experience of being in God's presence, all his questions and doubts are resolved. All religious quarrels and disputes become irrelevant for him. He sees and proclaims the presence of the Lord in everyone that he perceives, and he revels in the state of perfect bliss.

Jis tan lagya ishq kamal

Whosoever is stung by perfect love,
He dances out of tune,
He dances out of step!

Let no one vex an afflicted being,
Who has himself invited pain and misery.
He roots out both birth and life,¹
And becomes self-contained, he is self-absorbed.
Whosoever is stung by perfect love.

He who has donned the mantle of love,
He wields the decree of the Court Most High.
Having drunk the cup from Him,
All his doubts stand resolved.
Whosoever is stung by perfect love.

In whose heart the Beloved abides,
He loudly proclaims, "Beloved! O Beloved!"

1. Here birth indicates the cycle of birth and death, and life refers to the present life.

He needs neither a string¹ nor a mode,
 He revels in ecstasy of his own accord.
 Whosoever is stung by perfect love.

O Bullah, I have found the Lord's true abode;
 All false uproar² has come to an end.
 For the truthful I proclaim the Truth,
 I've got the vision of His pristine glory.

Whosoever is stung by perfect love,
 He dances out of tune,
 He dances out of step!

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 28

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1. A musical string.
 2. Uproar of religious disputes.

PERMEATION

The Lord permeates everyone and He pervades all places. In the beginning He was wrapped within himself and nothing else existed. He then created the universe and projected himself in every part of it. This was a wonderful game He played.

In the whole of His creation He gave a special place to man. Out of all species of living beings, it is only in the human form that He could be realized or the latent could become the manifest--"You are the crown of all creation. What a proclamation with the beat of drum!"

In the fourth stanza Bullah says that God abides within the human body, but man, in his ignorance, seeks him outside in temples and mosques, in deserts and in mountains--"He has taken abode in every house; and the people keep wandering in delusion."

He is in the lover as well as in the beloved. And, it is through love that He can be realized. He cannot be known through logic and reasoning—"He himself became Laila to steal Majnun's heart . . . Himself the lover, He himself is the Beloved. Here logic and reason have no part to play."

Kih karda beparvahi je!

What a carefree game He plays!

He said, "Let there be," and it happened.¹

He made the latent turn into the manifest,

Out of the formless He created the form.

What a wondrous game He played!

What a carefree game He plays!

1. *Qura'n*, 2:117.

When He disclosed the hidden secret,
 He lifted the veil from over His face.
 Why does He now hide from me?
 The Real permeates everyone.
 What a carefree game He plays!

He said, "We have honored mankind;
 None has been created like you;
 You are the crown of all creation."¹
 What a proclamation with the beat of drum!
 What a carefree game He plays!

He himself indulges in these carefree acts;
 He himself feels frightened of himself;
 He has taken abode in every house;
 And the people keep wandering in delusion.
 What a carefree game He plays!

He himself aroused longing to become mad in love.
 He himself became Laila to steal Majnun's heart.
 Himself He wept, himself consoled himself.
 O, what a game of love He plays!
 What a carefree game He plays!

Himself the lover, He himself is the Beloved.
 Here logic and reason have no part to play.
 Bullah rejoices in his union with the Beloved.
 Why does He create separation now?

What a carefree game He plays!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 203-205, poem 94

1. *Qura'n.*

PERVERSE TIMES

This *kafi* of Bulleh Shah is important and significant for various reasons. Revolutions and radical changes have often occurred at certain crucial times and in the reign of many kings. Poets have usually given hints of such events in their compositions. Generally, such hints point to the usual change of times, and one cannot say with any certainty to which specific event or period they refer to. Here, however, it is more than probable that the reference is to the Moghul rule and its downfall and to the rise of the Sikhs in the middle of the eighteenth century, which Bulleh Shah witnessed with his own eyes.

The *kafi* describes not only the political changes of the time, but also gives a graphic account of the decline in social and moral values. Men of merit and virtue had been thrown into the background, and sycophants and men lacking in moral stature had come to occupy positions of power and status.

At the end of the *kafi* Bulleh Shah states that it was all a part of the divine design, and no one can find fault with His command.

Ulte hor zamane aye

Perverse times have come,
The mystery of the Beloved to reveal.

Crows have begun to hunt hawks,
Sparrows have vanquished falcons.
Horses browse on rubbish,
Donkeys graze on lush green.
No love is lost between relatives,
Be they younger or elder uncles.

There is no accord between fathers and sons,
Nor any between mothers and daughters.
The truthful ones are being pushed about,
The tricksters are seated close by.
The front-liners have become wretched.
The back-benchers sit on carpets.
Those in tatters have turned into kings,
The kings have taken to begging.
O Bullah, comes the command from the Lord,
Who can ever alter His decree?

Perverse times have come,
The mystery of the Beloved to reveal.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 14

PHYSICAL LOVE

The thesis that love of the physical form of the Master is a necessary step for attaining love of his spiritual form is expounded in this *kafi*. The same theme has been dealt with by Plato in his "Symposium". Someone who has never been seen, never been heard, never been touched, in short, who has never been the object of our perception, can never be the object of our love.

Love raises the lover to dizzy heights of rapture. He virtually dies to this world, inasmuch as nothing of this world affects him.

In another phase of love, the phase in which the lover is separated from his beloved and he pines for union, intense restlessness and anguish are in store for him.

Ultimately, love raises the lover to the transcendental stage, when the Beloved is seen to pervade in everyone and everywhere. He then acquires prophetic powers, and every one of his utterances is a profound truth. His experience of Reality, transports him into the realm of supreme blessedness.

Jichar na ishq majazi lage

Unless one falls in physical¹ love,
The needle can't sew without the thread².

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1. Literally 'unreal' (majazi), commonly used as 'physical.'
 2. Signifies a form. The line means that unless one is in love with a form, there can be no love for the Formless One. Love of the physical form is a necessary prerequisite for love with the Formless One.

Physical love is a giver, a benefactor.
 It brings the wealth of blissful rapture.
 In whose marrow love gets absorbed,
 They die while they are still alive.¹

Love is the father, love is the mother.
 It brings joy, it gives ecstasy.
 The body of the lover increasingly withers.
 I stand under the shadow of the moon-like Beloved,
 And watch the fair ones laugh heartily.

Love teaches to transcend all laws;
 On whom love mounts its attack,
 He is rendered completely helpless.
 Each pore of his being gets dead drunk.

It is indeed an open secret,
 He sees His presence everywhere.
 Bullah, the lover, thus gets redeemed.
 He who is mindful of His abode,
 He gets salvation on meeting the Lord.
 He peeps into his mind, his self,
 Which transports him into the beatitude of bliss.

Unless one falls in physical love,
 The needle cannot sew without the thread.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 95-96, poem 50

1. Esoterically, it means withdrawing the soul currents from the body to the eye center, which produces true love for Master (in his astral form.)

PINING

One of the most representative of Bulleh Shah's poems, this short lyric is marked for a deep and touching passion, expressed in a simple but moving strain. Its appeal is as direct as it is powerful. The force with which the agony of a love-tormented heart is expressed, touches the finest chords of the human soul.

The poem brings out the intense longing of the lover for his Beloved, suggesting the profound attachment of the disciple for his Master. He feels envy for those who are blessed by the happy and joyful presence of the Master and laments his own sad plight wrought about by an unbearable separation.

Like a typical lover he blames the tale-bearers and back-biters, who he thinks have created a misunderstanding in the lover's heart, and weaned away his mind from him. The lover cries that the pangs of separation have driven him mad, and his heart pines to have a glimpse of his Beloved. Nothing else can extinguish the sharp merciless fire consuming him.

As a powerful contrast, the last stanza in the poem forcefully brings out the robust delight of the lover on his blissful union with the Beloved. The lover exclaims with ecstasy: "Oh, at long last my dearly Beloved, my glorious Lord has come home. I clasp him to my heart, and for ever have all my woes been drowned in the ocean of this surging joy."

Dil loche mahi yar nun!

My heart pines for my Love!

There are some who laugh and chat and rejoice;
Some there are who weep and wail and grieve.

Go and proclaim it to the spring in bloom:
My heart pines for my Love!

My wash and bath have all gone waste;¹
A knot has settled in my Beloved's heart.
Oh, set fire to this jewelery and adornment!
My heart pines for my Love!

Tale-bearers have driven me mad;
I am engulfed all over by anguish.
Beloved, come home that I may have
 a glimpse of thee!
My heart pines for my Love!

O Bullah, my Beloved has come home,
I have clasped Ranjha close to my heart,
My grief has vanished beyond the sea.

My heart pines for my Love!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 117, poem 59

1. It means: I decorated myself with pious deeds but in vain.

PLEA FOR PIETY

Man is reluctant to live a saintly life. He perpetrates various evils during his earthly existence: He is harsh and cruel to others; he is engulfed in carnal gratification; he forgets that he is subject to the Law of Karma, that he shall have to pay for all his actions; and he shows complete ignorance of the fact that human birth is a rare opportunity, the only outlet that the Lord has given him for deliverance from the cycle of birth and death.

Human existence should be availed of for working hard for God-realization. Its duration is short, the work to be accomplished is long and difficult, therefore, no time should be wasted in fruitless activities.

At the time of death one is alone. No relative or friend can accompany him. And, in general, the grief of relatives on his death is insincere for they are to inherit his worldly wealth as his legal heirs.

Death is the greatest calamity, but Bulleh Shah says that it could be turned into the greatest boon, if one could learn to die before his death. What he means in other words is: learn through spiritual practice the art of withdrawing your soul current from within your body to the eye center. Such a death is invaluable, and is devoutly to be wished. Such a death is not only voluntary and free from pain, but is also the most blissful experience.

Bullah once again reminds the reader that time is all too short for achieving his goal. But even now it is not too late, and messages from the Lord are constantly coming.

Hijab karen darveshi kolon

Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

With an *alfi*¹ on your shoulders,
With your head and feet bare,
You will take on a new form tomorrow.
By this wretched carnal greed,
You will get your head shaved.²
The Lord will ask in His court,
The account of your deeds;
What actions will you show to Him?
A heavy burden will befall on your head;
What answer will you make to Him?
Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

Rights of others you do not respect,
The burden of eating what is theirs will be on you.
You will have to come back to atone for it,
And get your precious field plundered.
Having staked your gamble in this world,
You will lose a winning game.³
Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

“As you sow, so shall you reap,”
This is the adage of the City of Love;
Here if you put up with hell, dear,
Hereafter you will enjoy the glorious spring.
Sow saffron so that saffron should grow,
If you sow garlic, what will you eat?

-
1. *Alfi* is a kind of shirt worn by fakirs : also put on the dead body. It is a long piece of cloth with a longitudinal cut in the middle through which the head is passed. It has no sleeves and is not sewn by a tailor.
 2. Be brought to disgrace, at the time of death.
 3. Earning the Name of God.

Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

Set yourself to earning,¹ brother,
For this is the time to earn.
You have the count of seventeen² on the dice.
With such a count to your credit,
You should not lose the game.
When the game is lost, the pawns will go;
The show will be over.
Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

You eat meat, you chew betels,
You dress up like a dandy;
You wear a tilted turban,
You put on foppish shoes,
You strut about proudly.
Like a lamb, you are being nourished,
To be slaughtered by the Messenger of Death.
Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

You have but a moment's stay here,
For your permanent abode is there.
Gather your gifts to send them home,
Now is the right time for this indeed.
There you will get nothing,
You will have to take everything from here.³
Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

Learn the lesson of His love.
Why do you drown yourself in vain?

1. Earning the name of God.

2. In the game of *chaupat*, it signifies the lucky fall of dice with maximum marks. Here it denotes human birth.

3. You will have to earn your merit through spiritual practice in the lifetime.

You tire your brain by reading tales.

Why do you get stuck in the mire?

The letter¹ of love is the only point,

Why carry camel-loads of books?

Loath to live a saintly life,

How long will you issue commands?

Even while dying from hunger,

Utter God's Name, this alone is apt;

Both the heaps are heavier than stone,²

Hard indeed is going this round!

When you are afflicted with misfortune,

How will you account for it?³

Loath to live a saintly life,

How long will you issue commands?

Why do mother, father and daughter weep?

Why does the son weep, may I ask?

Wives, girls, sisters, brothers,

Come and stand as legal heirs.

It is they not you that rob,

You will be robbed after death as well.

Loath to live a saintly life,

How long will you issue commands?

All by yourself you will have to go,

No one else will go with you;

Near and dear ones will return home midway,

Weeping and beating their breasts.

You will have your abode,⁴

Outside the city in the wilderness.

Loath to live a saintly life,

How long will you issue commands?

-
1. *Alif* is the letter of love. It symbolizes the unity of God. The poet suggests that love of God alone has value. Heaps of bookish knowledge or knowledge of scriptures is useless.
 2. The responsibilities of both the worlds are heavier than stone.
 3. Your misfortunes are the result of your own past actions.
 4. In the cemetery or the crematorium.

I give you sound advice,
 If only you were to heed it.
 The dead will rise on the day of judgement,
 But the lover will never die.
 If you die before your death,
 You'll reap the fruit of death.¹
 Loath to live a saintly life,
 How long will you issue commands?

"If you follow the path of law,
 The prophet will come to your help."
 The people do say so,
 But accomplish little, and come to grief.
 Who can wake you from your sleep?
 On waking you will sorely repent.
 Loath to live a saintly life,
 How long will you issue commands?

If you act upon our² advice,
 We shall seat you on the throne.
 Whom the whole world seeks,
 We shall unite you with Him.
 If you practice abstinence,³
 You will hold the Lord to heart.
 Loath to live a saintly life,
 How long will you issue commands?

You have wasted this life of yours;
 You have ruined your life to come.
 With your insatiable greed,
 Your face has acquired a pallor.
 Listen even now, if you feel penitent,
 You will be called a lover of God.

-
1. If you are able to withdraw your soul-current to the eye center, you will reach the entrance to the inner spiritual regions. cf. "I die daily" (St. Paul) and "Die thou before thy death." (Qura'n)
 2. It refers to the advice of true saints.
 3. Renunciation of sense pleasures.

Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

O Bullah, if you mean to go to the Beloved,
Get going! Why do you tarry?
Why are you now in two minds,
When the message has arrived from Home?
Reading the letter¹ you've lost your wits,
You will wreck your life by ceaseless weeping.

Loath to live a saintly life,
How long will you issue commands?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 110-114, poem 57

1. Warrant of death.

PRAY MERGE ME WITH YOU

This world has been compared to a dreadful jungle, infested with ferocious beasts and evil spirits. It is almost impossible to cross this forest without the care and the protecting hand of a guide. The disciple who aims at God-realization needs the constant care and guidance of his Master. The lure of the world and the temptations of sense-pleasure are too strong for him to resist all by himself. So, he strongly pleads to his Master to make him one with himself.

Apne sang ralai, pyare!

Merge me with you, O my Beloved!
Merge me with you.

At first you loved me with much cheer;
Whether I loved you or you loved me,
Pray keep this love steady for ever.
I am way laid by bands of robbers;
Evil spirits confront me in fearsome jungles.
Cheetahs, leopards and wolves strut my path;
The customs officer¹ is demanding;
Countless imps are stalking the river bank.
Terror grips my heart,
Pray take my boat to safety.
I pray to the true Lord,
And may my prayer be granted:
Unveil your kingly face O Lord, to Bullah.

Merge me with you, O my Beloved!
Merge me with you.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 8, poem 5

1. *Dharam Raj*, the Dispenser of Justice.

RADIANCE OF LOVE

The knowledge, that emanates from love, is spiritually so uplifting that it demolishes all barriers of religion and nationality. Bullah proclaims that he is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, but only a lover. And, it is only through love that the Lord can be realized.

In the second stanza Bullah denounces the orthodox preacher, who entraps innocent people in the net of rituals and customs. His machinations are exposed by the lover of God, because it is he alone who has realized Him.

Aisa jagya gyan palita

Such knowledge has been ignited in me,
A Hindu or a Muslim I have ceased to be.

Love alone is acceptable to me,
The lover alone realizes the Lord.
Such knowledge has been ignited in me!

Look, how the thugs have raised a tumult!
They have formed rituals of birth and death.
The deluded ones fall into their trap.
The lover alone exposes their guiles.
Such knowledge has been ignited in me!

O Bullah, unique is the state of the lover!
Those endowed with love so relish it.
The foolish worldling is all befuddled.
Wisdom lies in keeping silent.

Such knowledge has been ignited in me!
A Hindu or a Muslim I have ceased to be.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 34, poem 21

RANJHA IS MY KA'BA

The holiest of the holy places for a Muslim is *Ka'ba*. And, it is the devout wish of every Muslim to go there on pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime. Bullah, using the analogy of Heer and Ranjha, proclaims that his *Ka'ba* is his Master, his Ranjha, and the greatest pilgrimage for him is to go to see his *Murshid*. He says that people prostrate before *Ka'ba* but he would make obeisance before his Master. He entreats his Master to overlook his faults, because in his native state as the Lord he had given the pledge on the day of Creation to redeem all sinners. In the last stanza he reaffirms that the Savior, in His matchless compassion, would come to his aid.

Main Kyon kar Jawan ka'be nun?

Wherefore should I go to *Ka'ba*?

My heart pines for the throne of Hazara.¹

People prostrate themselves before *Ka'ba*,

I offer my prostrations to my Beloved.

Do not forsake me for my sins, O Ranjha!

Recall to mind that Covenant!²

I am a novice, I know not swimming.

As the Savior, my drowning will be to your shame!

I have not found your peer;

I have searched the whole world.

1. The native place of Ranjha, Hazara is in the Jhang District of Pakistan.

2. Made between God and the soul on the day of Creation that He would himself come to redeem the soul.

O Bullah, machless is my Lord's love!
He redeems all sinners like me.

Wherefore should I go to *Ka'ba*?
My heart pines for the throne of Hazara.

Faqir Mohd. Kulliyat, pp. 271-272, poem 125

RANJHA IS MY MECCA

Bulleh Shah has used the folklore of Heer and Ranjha to express his love for his Master. Among Muslims, the holiest place is Mecca, but for Heer it is Ranjha, and for Bulleh Shah it is his Master, Inayat Shah. One line in the poem signifies that God abides within the human body and not in holy places built with brick and mortar--"My house with my Bridegroom is my Mecca." Among those pious Muslims who go to Mecca are also some who are thieves and burglars, but there is no such impurity in Bullah's love for his Master. The whole poem is steeped in the ecstasy of love.

Haji lok makke nun jande

The *hajis* go to Mecca, my Mecca is dear Ranjha;
My friends, I am crazy!

Betrothed, I belong to Ranjha, my father
is being stubborn.

The *hajis* go to Mecca;
my house¹ with my Bridegroom² is my Mecca.

Within the house are *hajis*³ and *ghazis*³
as also thieves and shop-lifters.

The *hajis* go to Mecca, I go to the throne of Hazara.⁴

1. Body.

2. The Lord.

3. Warriors, who fight against infidels. The mystics maintain that the virtues residing in the body are the true friends of man (*Hajis* and *Ghazis*) who keep him company on his pilgrimage to the Ultimate. The evil passions are the thieves and robbers who rob him of his wealth of spirituality.

4. The native place of Ranjha.

Whichever side the Beloved is, that way the *Ka'ba* is,
You may check it up with all the four¹ books.

The *hajis* go to Mecca, my Mecca is dear Ranjha;
My friends, I am crazy!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 108-109, poem 56

1. The Torāḥ, the Talmud, the Bible and the *Qura'n*.

REVEL WITH THE LORD

This poem is full of mystic import. The window of the courtyard signifies the eye center or the third eye. Here the aspirant or the practitioner of yoga has a vision of the Lord. The courtyard stands for the body, which has nine sense organs—"This courtyard has nine doors." The tenth outlet is the third eye, which is hidden—"And the tenth has been kept hidden." This is the point from where the true spiritual journey commences. The revolution of the wheel denotes repetition of the holy names, for it is this repetition which leads to withdrawal of the soul current from within the body and leads one to realization of God within oneself. The main obstacle in this process is the mind—"The small elephant," which refuses to get concentrated and remains restless—"In this courtyard is a small elephant . . . it does not leave in peace even those who keep vigilant."

Khed lai vich vehhre ghumi ghum!

Play thou in the courtyard with joy!

In this courtyard is a delightful niche;

In the niche is a window.

I spread my bed in the window,

And revel in play with my Beloved.

This courtyard has nine doors,

And the tenth has been kept hidden.

I do not know the value of the lane,

In which comes the gracious Lord.

In this courtyard is a lovely wheel,

In the niche is a window.

I remember my Beloved,

With every revolution of the wheel.

In this courtyard is a small elephant,
Which battles with its chains.
O Bullah, it does not leave in peace,
Even those who keep vigilant.¹

Play thou in the courtyard with joy!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 193, poem 89

-
1. The more vigilant a practitioner becomes, the greater is the strength with which his mind tries to create obstacles in his inward and upward spiritual path.

SEEKING CURE

Love has been called a malady in this poem. And the poet is seeking a cure for this malady. However, it is not the intense feeling in love, which is painful but the suffering which follows in its wake because of the absence of the Beloved. In other words, it is the separation from the Beloved which causes suffering, and its cure would lie in union with Him.

In love there is complete elimination of the ego. The beloved alone exists for the lover. In this identification there is such bliss, that the lover would never like to return to his own separate entity.

Tusi karo asadi kari!

Pray, work your remedy on me!
How grievous has become my malady!

He came to abide in my house;
He came to delude me with his guiles.
Ask Him if it was magic or a dream.
Get all the truth revealed from Him.
Pray, work your remedy on me!

He dwells within my heart;
He sits and laughs with me.
If I make a query, He gets up and flees;
And, He takes to flight as does a hawk.
Pray, work your remedy on me!

I have entered the deep waters of love;
I am being swallowed by the turbulent waves;
I am caught in the whirlpool to spin;
The rain is in torrents, the night pitch dark.
Pray, work your remedy on me!

Such are the magician's tricks He plays,
 That He conceals all stars under the *kharas*,¹
 And the ropes of *munj*² He turns into snakes!
 I am a sacrifice to His charms and spells.³
 Pray, work your remedy on me!

This flute which the Lord has played,
 Has inflicted a grievous wound on my heart.
 I smart in pain and cry out in anguish,
 And I shed bitter and copious tears.
 Pray, work your remedy on me!

My mad love has brought disgrace on me;
 It has produced a deep and wide chasm.
 Like a lamb I am in the stranglehold of love,
 I am ever under the grip of fear.
 Pray, work your remedy on me!

This imperious love can never be concealed;
 Entrenched inside, it dances on house-tops.
 O, bring me a message from the True One;
 Let someone come and relieve my suffering.
 Pray, work your remedy on me!

What do I know of the kindness of love?
 Even my friends inflict cruelty and rancor.
 My love gives me *galgal*,⁴ not the watermelon.
 O, is there no physician or apothecary for me?
 Pray, work your remedy on me!

-
1. Baskets made of reeds, used at weddings. Both the bride and the bridegroom sit on them and bathe, according to marriage customs.
 2. A plant, the finer leaves of which are made into mats, and the more coarse ones are woven into ropes and sandals.
 3. This stanza is full of philosophical import. The poet wants to convey the idea that God is a magician who has hidden Reality behind the veil of phenomena. It is all due to an illusion, that a rope appears as a snake.
 4. A crude species of lime or lemon, a citron, used mainly in preparing pickles.

My Bridegroom is like the bamboo tree of Bareilly,¹
 I am a branch broken from that tree.
 I weep bitterly and pine for my Spouse.
 Let someone go and assuage His feeling.
 Pray, work your remedy on me!

O Bullah, if I were to go to my Bridegroom,
 I would not find my head and body² again.
 If I were to reach there, I would never return;
 I have wasted my life here all in vain.

Pray, work your remedy on me!
 How grievous has become my malady!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 77-81, poem 44

-
1. Bareilly is famous for its bamboo trees.
 2. I would become free from my ego.

SEPARATION

The poet has drawn the picture of a lovelorn bride. It is the symbol of the disciple or the lover, who is separated from his Master or his Lord, and is pining to be united with Him. The last stanza brings the happy tidings of the call of the Beloved from above, who would welcome the lover from this world of suffering, where our stay, in any case, is not long.

Sajanan de vichhore kolon

In separation of my Beloved,
I strain the blood of my body.

Pains and thorns have all combined against me.
Neither my parent's nor my-in-laws' house
is there for me.

Pain-stricken I am lying at your door.
You are the cure for the afflicted one!
In separation of my Beloved,
I strain the blood of my body.

I take out my heart and cut it into pieces,
This too is not worth presentation.
I have nothing more to offer.
So remain content with a glass of water.
In separation of my Beloved,
I strain the blood of my body.

Why do my despondent eyes shed tears now?
Did they not fall in the snare, of themselves?
Now it is hard indeed for them to be free!
What help is there for this miserable wretch?
In separation of my Beloved,
I strain the blood of my body.

O Bulleh Shah, the Lord now thunders!
The drums of love roar overhead.
For the brief four days we halt here;
Then comes the clarion call for our departure.

In separation of my Beloved,
I strain the blood of my body.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 145-146, poem 71

SHAH INAYAT

This poem is a tribute by Bulleh Shah to his Master, Shah Inayat, for whom He has intense love. In a lover's plaint he expresses sorrow at not being able to see his Master often enough—"Sometimes he comes, and sometimes not. Thus does he raise a fire in my heart!" He begs of him not to deprive him of the boon of seeing Him.

The second stanza brings out the courage that emanates from love—"I run to the river in pitch dark night. The wilderness of which all are frightened, I willingly go and search for Him there."

Vekho ni Shauh Inayat Sain

Look, what tricks He plays on me,
My Master and Lord, Shah Inayat!

Sometimes He comes, and sometimes not:
Thus does He raise a fire in my heart!
Pray, bring the message of the Name of God.
O, starve me not of a glimpse from you!
Look, what tricks He plays on me,
My Master and Lord, Shah Inayat!

O Bullah, how I am smitten in His love!
I run to the river in pitch dark night.
The wilderness of which all are frightened,
I willingly go and search for Him there.

Look, what tricks He plays on me.
My Master and Lord, Shah Inayat!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 321, poem 149

SPIN AND ROAM NOT AIMLESSLY

The poem serves as a warning and a reminder to man. It warns that the time at his disposal is short to attain the objective of his life; and it is a reminder that he should not waste his time in useless pursuits. The symbol of the spinning wheel, as already mentioned, stands for the human body. And, spinning signifies meditation which leads to withdrawal of the soul current to the eye center. The wedding day points to the time of death and when the soul is expected to encounter the Lord. The parents' house for the girl to be married means this world, where her stay is short--"The days are few, you waste your time. You will not come again to your parents' house."

In the second stanza the word "dowry" stands for the spiritual wealth gained through meditation. Without any spiritual preparation one will have a hard time in the hereafter--"If you go to your in-laws without a dowry, you will not be liked by anyone there."

The third stanza reminds us that others have made an adequate preparation for the next world, but we are quite neglectful of our duty.

The last stanza signifies that all worldly attainments in the form of wealth, status, power and the like are useless, if they are not accompanied by spiritual merit in us--"O Bullah, only if the spouse came to my house, would the bracelets and the betel leaf be pleasing. If I have any virtue, he would clasp me to his heart; or else I shall weep bitter tears of blood."

Katt kure na vatt kure

Do your spinning, O girl, roam not aimlessly.
Take off the hank of yarn, put it in the basket.

Your parents have fixed your wedding day,
 And you are still unmindful of it.
 The days are few, you waste your time.
 You will not come again to your parents' house.
 Do your spinning, O girl, roam not aimlessly.

If you go to your in-laws without a dowry,
 You will not be liked by anyone there.
 How will you ever please your Spouse?
 Take counsel from the *fakirs*, O girl.
 Do your spinning, O girl, roam not aimlessly.

Your companions have got their garments
 dyed for dowry.
 They have bright red clothes on their persons.
 Why have you set your feet in the wrong direction?
 When you reach there, you will discover the truth.¹
 Do your spinning, O girl, roam not aimlessly.

O Bullah, only if the Spouse came to my house,
 Would the bracelets and the betel leaf be pleasing.
 If I have any virtue, he would clasp me to his heart,
 Or else I shall weep bitter tears of blood.

Do your spinning, O girl, roam not aimlessly.
 Take off the hank of yarn, and put it in the basket.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, pp. 50-51

1. The expression suggests that at the time of death you will come to know the reality, which will make you repent for missed opportunities.

STAY O LOVE !

In the mood of a lover's plaint, Bullah accuses the Lord of being unkind to His lovers. He gives a long list of lovers of God who had to pay a heavy price for their love. In most cases, they had to lose their very lives. And, whenever the lovers lost their way or went astray, the Lord himself was responsible—indirectly, if not directly—for making them go awry. For instance, He forbade Adam to taste wheat,¹ but then He sent Satan in pursuit to tempt him.

Others mentioned in the poem include Jesus, Noah, Moses, Ishmael, Jonah, Yusuf, Solomon, Abraham, Job, Mansur, Rahab, Zacharias, Sarmad, Shams and Shah Sharaf. Among pairs of classical lovers he has mentioned Laila and Majnun, Heer and Ranjha, Mirza and Sahiban, and Sassi and Punnun. He has also referred to the heroes of the epics of *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat* who had to go through untold suffering. Among those conceited rulers, who claimed divinity and asked their subjects to worship them instead of God, are mentioned Nimrod, Pharaoh and Harnakash. So, Bullah seems to complain that God gave suffering to those who were His loyal and steadfast lovers—apparently to test them—as also to those who were His rebels—to punish them.

Raho raho oye ishq maryai!

Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me !

Say, whom did you ever ferry across?

1. The "forbidden fruit" is, in Jewish tradition, mainly mentioned as : grape, or fig, or wheat. The same and other opinions—such as referring to it as the apple—are found in Christian and Muslim tradition, and other commentaries to *Qura'n*. (Encyclopaedia of Islam, page 177)

You forbade Adam to taste wheat,
 You yourself set Satan after him;
 You cast him out in disgrace from heaven,
 What curious troubles did you create!
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

You made Jesus begotten without a father;¹
 You raised the deluge to harass Noah;
 You made the son fight against father.
 You have been the undoing of them both!
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

You made Moses climb up Mount Sinai;²
 Ruthlessly You got Ishmael slaughtered;
 You had Jonah swallowed by a fish;
 Oh, to what a station You raised them all!
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

Zulaikha you made to see a dream;
 Yusuf You got thrown into a well;
 His brothers You got blamed for it;
 Thus did you lift him to such honor!
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

You made Solomon work on the furnace;
 You had Abraham thrown on a pyre;
 You infested the body of Job with worms;
 You killed Hasan by giving him poison;
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

You put Mansur on the gallows;
 You got Rahab's gall bladder extracted;

1. Christians believe so.

2. Moses wished to see God face to face. The Lord manifested His effulgence on Mount Sinai, and it turned into dust. Moses repented and became the first to believe. See Sura III, 142-145 of the '*Qura'n*'.

You got Zacharias' head cut with a saw;
 Oh, what help did you render them all?
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

You got the throat of Sarmad slashed;
 You made Shams utter the fatal words;
 You made him declare "By my command rise up."
 And, You flayed him alive from head to foot.
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

This love creates many a trouble;
 Love cannot be concealed within or without;
 Love turned Shah Sharaf into a wandering monk;
 You made him shiver twelve years in a river,
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

You raised much noise on Laila's love;
 You made Majnun fix his eyes on her;
 You made him suck the milk of love,
 When he spent a full year in the well.
 Stay, stay, O love, You have ruined me!

Love then turned its aim at Heer,
 And made Ranjha his ears¹ get pricked.
 When Mirza came to be wed to Sahiban,
 He paid the price of love with his head.
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

Sassi You made wander on sand-dunes.
 You made Sohni drown on an unbaked pitcher;
 You brought misery and suffering to Rodda,
 When he was cut into pieces to take his life.
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

You made the armies of brothers² killed;
 You made water-skins eaten by rats.

1. He became a yogi for his love.

2. Hasan and Hussain, the grandsons of the prophet, lost water in the battle of Karbala.

O Lord, what great power You wield !
 My head is sacrifice unto you.
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me !

You made Kauravas and Pandavas fight a war ;
 Eighteen *Khunis*¹ were destroyed in it.
 You made real brothers kill each other.
 What justice did you bring off there ?
 Stay, stay, O love you have ruined me !

Nimrod made himself called Almighty ;
 He hurled an arrow at God himself.
 You got him killed by a mosquito.
 You got Croesus buried under the earth.
 Stay, stay, O love, You have ruined me !

When You made Pharaoh call himself God,
 You made him enter the river Nile.
 And, verily, this brought calamity to him.
 You made him die of his own egotism.
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me !

You invaded Lanka and blew Your conch ;
 You made Lanka ruined by Rama.
 You made Harnakash build a heaven,
 And, You got him killed on the threshold.
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me !

When poor Sita was carried away by Ravan,
 You made Hanuman set Lanka on fire.
 The palace of Ravan was thus ruined ;
 You also got him killed at last.
 Stay, stay, O love, You have ruined me !

What discretion did you use with the *gopis* ?
 You got their butter plundered by Krishna.

1. A large army unit consisting of foot, horse, elephant and chariot corps.

King Kansa was seized and brought before him;
 Caught by his hair he was dashed to the ground.
 Stay, stay, O love, you have ruined me!

You yourself raised the Patriarch¹
 And then You made him fight against Yazid.
 A tumult arose in the fourteen vaults;
 You made his head stick on a spear.
 Stay, stay, O love, You have ruined me!

You made the Moghuls drink cups of poison;
 You turned beggars, wearing tatters, into kings.
 The gentry had to seal their lips.
 With what finesse You have reproved them all!
 Stay, stay, O love, You have ruined me!

Bulleh Shah is a humble *fakir*;
 He leaves the world, proclaiming loud:
 My name will remain bright in the world.
 You created me from the fount of light!

Stay, stay, O love, You have ruined me!
 Say, whom did you ever ferry across?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pages 126-134, poem 65

1. Hasan, one of the grandsons of prophet Mohammed.

SWEEPERESS OF THE LORD

The analogy of the sweeperess is used in this *kafi* for cleansing oneself from the lower passions. Bulleh Shah calls himself a sweeperess of the Lord, as he sweeps away the dirt of lust and anger with contemplation and spiritual knowledge. These two serve him as his winnowing device and his broom. And his service of the Lord as His sweeperess is not forced service but labor of love. In fact, he suffers from the fear that his service might be terminated—"Day and night I beg: 'Send me not away from Your Court'.

In the last line Bullah pays a tribute to his Master, saying that it is through him that he can attain union with the Lord.

Main churetri han sache sahib di sarkaron

I am a sweeperess in the service of the true Lord.

With the *chhajli*¹ of contemplation and the broom of knowledge,

I sweep off the chaff of lust and anger.

I am a sweeperess in the service of the true Lord.

Let the *Qazi* know! Let the judge mark!

I am free from all forced labor.

Day and night I beg: "Send me not away from Your Court."

I am a sweeperess in the service of the true Lord.

Besides You there is none who is mine;
to whom should I cry for help?

"For the sake of my Spouse Inayat, pray give me a share of Your sight," entreats Bullah.

I am a sweeperess in the service of the true Lord.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 282, poem 130

1. A winnowing implement for separating grain from chaff.

SWINGS OF LOVE

This poem depicts joy and delight of union with the Lord. It is quite different from most other *kafis* of Bulleh Shah, in which he complains to the Lord for being unkind to His lovers.

In essence all men are equal. In fact, they are drops of the same ocean of divinity. All differences between castes and creeds, between *Shias* and *Sunnis*, between *yogis* with long hair and *munis* with shorn hair are superficial.

God is near the royal vein (*Shah Rag*), and to realize Him one has to withdraw his soul current to that point—"My aim is fixed on 'I am near the royal vein'."

The last stanza speaks of the bliss in which Bullah revels at the vision of the pristine beauty of the Lord. And, unlike human beings, the Lord does not forget His lovers even for a moment.

Mainun ishq hulare denda

I revel in the swings of love.

Ever on my lips, my Beloved beckons me.

What do you ask about my essence and traits?

I have the same essence as had Adam.

My aim is fixed on "I am near the royal vein,"¹

Where the mystery of the Lord thrills.

I revel in the swings of love.

Somewhere there is a *Shia*, somewhere a *Sunni*;

Somewhere there is a long-haired one,

somewhere a shorn one.

But I am free from all these constraints.

1. A verse from the *Qura'n* : 50 : 16

Whatever I ask the Beloved, He grants.
I revel in the swings of love.

O Bullah, He has come from a long distance;
The Beloved's face has enchanted me.
He has made his pure beauty manifest.
I do not forget Him even for a moment.

I revel in the swings of love.
Ever on my lips, my Beloved beckons me.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 267-268, poem 122

THE ALL-PERVADING BELOVED

In this poem Bulleh Shah sees the Lord manifest in his Master, Inayat Shah. Not only is he enamored of the physical appearance and external qualities of his Master—“Hail, You Beauteous One, wondrous is Your gait ! What coquetry with which You walk !”, but he sees him pervade in everyone, as is the Lord omnipresent—“You yourself are manifest, You yourself hidden . . . You yourself are the preacher, You yourself the judge . . . You put the sacred thread of the infidel round Your neck, and go and sit in the idol-temple. You raise an uproar and a tumult in the whole wide world !”

In the last stanza Bullah expresses his gratitude to his Master for the many boons he showers on him—“You are of a noble birth, O Ranjha, You protect the honor of those who love You. O Bullah, my Lord Inayat graces me with a glance every moment.”

Wah sohnian teri chal ajaib !

Hail, You Beauteous One, wondrous is Your gait !

What coquetry with which You walk !

You yourself are manifest, You yourself hidden,
and You yourself conceal yourself.

You yourself are the preacher, You yourself the judge,
and You yourself are the teacher.

Hail, You Beauteous One, wondrous is Your gait !

You put the sacred thread of the infidel
round your neck,

And go and sit in the idol-temple.

You raise an uproar and a tumult
in the whole wide world !

Hail, You Beauteous One, wondrous is Your gait !

You are of a noble birth, O Ranjha,
You protect the honor of those who love You.
O Bullah, my Lord Inayat graces me
with a glance every moment.

Hail, You Beauteous One, wondrous is Your gait !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 312, poem 144

THE ASSEMBLAGE

The poem refers to a practice among an order of *fakirs* to gather together for reveling in a feast of music. The esoteric significance of this poem lies in adulation of the transcendental unstruck melody. This melody can be heard only when one is able to withdraw his soul current to the eye center, behind the two eyes. And, this music has the characteristic of uniting the listener to the Lord. Once this experience of hearing the sound current has been achieved, all hatred and malice disappear from the individual's mind, because he begins to see the same Lord manifest in all beings. Bullah impresses upon the members of the assemblage that without hearing this divine music and without union with the Lord, the assemblage is futile. And Yet this goal is not easy to attain, because it demands of the mind to become absolutely motionless.

Ao faqiro mele challie

Come *fakirs*, let us go to the assemblage,
And listen to the music of the mystic.

Listen to the many-splendored Unstruck Melody,
Renouncing the colored robes of the ascetic.
The unstruck music emanates from the orifice¹
of the head,
It is all-uniting,² enemy to none.
Without the union the assemblage is barren,
Your capital and interest both go down the drain.

-
1. The opening in the center behind the two eyes, the third eye or the eye center.
 2. Union with the Unstruck Melody.

Hard is mendicancy and the path of the lover,
For you have to still the mind in that music.
Such a lover¹ becomes God from man,
But Bullah has remained where he was.

Come *fakirs*, let us go to the assemblage,
And listen to the music of the mystic.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 29, poem 18

1. Such a lover as practices the Unstruck Melody.

THE BELOVED DEPARTS

This love lyric paints a picture of an assembly of persons, in which the Beloved occupies the pivotal position. When the time comes for the beloved to leave, the poignancy of the pain of separation which characterizes the heart of the lover is vividly described. It seems to point to a specific gathering, in which Inayat Shah was present, and Bullah felt the pangs of separation when his Master, along with some other followers, rises to leave.

Some scholars, however, have interpreted the poem quite differently. For them the departure of the loved one signifies his departure from this world or his death. All relatives, friends and dear ones of the departed soul wring their hands in despair, because his departure is forever, and he will never come back to this world.

Utth challe guandhon yar

The Beloved is about to leave my neighborhood ;
O Lord, what shall I do ?

He has risen and will stay no more ;
His companions are ready to go with him ;
O Lord, what shall I do ?

On all sides are rumors of his departure ;
From every direction rises a tumult,
O Lord, what shall I do ?

Burning throbs rise from my heart ;
Without seeing him there is no peace ;
O Lord, what shall I do ?

O Bullah, away from the dear Master,
I am neither on this shore nor across.¹
O Lord, what shall I do?

The Beloved is about to leave my neighborhood;
O Lord, what shall I do?

Nazir Ahmad., Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 8

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1. It suggests that the life of the disciple who has made no effort at spiritual progress, will be miserable both here and in the hereafter.

THE CRUCIAL POINT

Two interpretations are possible of this *kafi*, the general and the esoteric. In the general interpretation, the central point for God-realization is brought out in the last stanza. The key to the spiritual quest of the aspirant lies in finding the spiritual guide—"Catch hold of your Master, for therein lies God's worship." All else required for reaching the destination would follow of necessity. Once the perfect Master has been found, the heart of the seeker will be cleansed, his passions and carnal desires will leave him, and he will come to know the true method of meditation.

Bulleh Shah enumerates the various practices that spiritual aspirants resort to, but which are all futile. Such practices may be briefly mentioned as prostrations on the ground, forty days' fasts, austerities, and arduous journeys to holy places. Zealous pilgrims to Mecca rub their forehead on the ground so repeatedly that a dark-colored arch is formed on it. This is considered by them as a sign of great piety. And, when they return from the pilgrimage, they put on blue cloaks to show that they have attained much religious merit. Other devout Muslims in order to share some of their piety pay sums of money to the Mecca-returned pilgrims: "They sell the merit of their pilgrimage."

Esoterically, however, the term 'point' is said to signify the point in the center behind the two eyes, the third eye or what Jesus Christ called 'the single eye.' Muslim mystics have called it *Nuqta-i-Suvaida* (the Black Spot). The real merit of meditation lies in concentrating the soul, vacating it from the body, and bringing it to the eye center. This process has been

described in mystic or spiritual literature as “dying while living.” This gives the one who practices it immense power and profound knowledge. The real spiritual journey is said to commence from this point.

Ik nuqte vich gall mukdi ei !

Wisdom is contained in a single point !¹

Grasp the point, leave alone all calculations.²

Tear off all accounts of heresy and doubt,³

Forget the torments of grave and hell.

Cleanse Your heart of all desires.

Truth comes home in the profound saying :

Wisdom is contained in a single point !

In vain you rub your forehead on earth,

And show a long arch formed on it.

Your false note in the recital of *Kalma*,

Makes you a laughing stock of people.

You do not know the art at all,

By which to bring the *Kalma* in the heart.

Can Truth be kept hidden for ever ?

Wisdom is contained in a single point !

Many there are who return from Mecca as pilgrims.

They put on blue garments to impress the world.

They sell the merit of their pilgrimage,

And thereby earn an ample amount.

Who would approve of such a fraud ?

Can Truth be silenced for long ?

Wisdom is contained in a single point !

1. Finding of a true master (brought out in the last stanza). Esoterically, it signifies the point behind the two eyes, known as *Nuqta-i-Suvaidda* (The Black Spot).

2. Counting the beads of the rosary, etc.

3. All doubts disappear at the eye center.

Some retire to forests ;
 Some journey across the oceans ;
 Some live on a grain a day ;
 The fools tire their bodies senselessly,
 And they return home weak and sick.
 In vain do some waste their life in forty days' fasts.
 Wisdom is contained in a single point !

Catch hold of Your Master,
 For therein lies God's worship.
 In Your Master's love,
 You are carefree and in raptures.
 In his love you attain freedom
 From alluring desires and possessions ;
 Your heart is rid of all impurities.
 O Bullah, how long can you hold back the truth ?

Wisdom is contained in a single point !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 22-23, poem 12

THE DELICATE SECRET

The Lord is within us, and He pervades in everyone and all places. This is the delicate secret that Bullah has unraveled. He is, however, reluctant to disclose it, as it would create many complications in the world and in the lives of the orthodox.

He is to be found not only in the mosque, but also in the temple—"He offers prayers in the mosque, then enters the temple adorned with idols." Indeed, He is residing within every man as his Master—"He is One, and the houses are many; but He is the master of every house."

He is present not only in His lovers, but also in His enemies. He seems to take delight in becoming two and in fighting with himself—"He created Moses as well as Pharaoh. Becoming two, why does He fight with himself?"

In the last stanza Bullah reiterates the truth that one has to pay a heavy price to win His love—"O Bullah, separation in love is a wolf! It drinks blood and it eats flesh."

Kih karda ni kih karda ni!

See, what He does, see, what He does, friends!
Let someone ask, "What does the Beloved do?"

To dwell joyfully together in the same house,
It does not behove to draw a screen in between.
He offers prayers in the mosque,
Then enters the temple adorned with idols.

He is One, and the houses are many;
He is the master of every house.

Wherever I look, I find Him present ;
He is ever in the company of all.

He created Moses as well as Pharaoh ;
Becoming two why does He fight with himself ?
He is present everywhere and sees everything ;
Then whom does Chuchak¹ take away ?

Why should I reveal such a delicate secret ?
I can neither speak it out, nor bear it.
O Bullah, separation in love is a wolf !
It drinks blood and it eats flesh.

See, what He does, see, what He does, friends !
Let someone ask, "What does the Beloved do ?"

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 200-202, poem 93

1. Father of Heer. He took Heer away to poison her.

THE DIVINE RANJHA

The symbol of Ranjha has been used in this poem for the Lord. It was on His command that divine light and sound came into Inayat Shah—"From the luminous throne came the call, and it was heard at the throne of Lahore." Bulleh Shah discloses the secret in this poem that love for the Lord by the seeker emanates from the Lord himself—"Ranjha, the Lord of the throne of Hazara, has now run away from there like a thief." It is the Lord who is seeking His admirer by leaving His celestial home and coming to this world in the guise of man as a Master.

The last two lines state that divine love makes one immortal—"O Bulleh Shah, I shall not have to die; someone else will now go into the grave."

Mera Ranjha hun koi hor

My Ranjha now is someone else.

From the luminous throne came the call,
And, it was heard at the throne of Lahore.
The lovelorn roam about in the manner,
As does cattle wander in the forest.

Ranjha, the Lord of the throne of Hazara,¹
Has now run away from there like a thief.
O Bulleh Shah, I shall not have to die;
Someone else will now go into the grave.

My Ranjha now is someone else.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p.263. poem 119

1. The native place of Ranjha.

THE ESSENCE OF LOVE

In this beautiful love lyric Bullah describes the nature of love in the words of Heer for Ranjha. In his love, Heer forgets not only her household chores, but also becomes unaware of her surroundings. She can neither sleep nor can she keep awake. Outwardly, she flings curses at Ranjha, but in her heart of hearts she prays for him. In such language of love she wishes to put the people off the scent.

In the last line Bullah discloses that the Beloved is not far. He is not to be found in forests and jungles. He resides right within the lover himself.

Bullah kih janen zat ishq di kaun

O Bullah, What do you know!
what the essence of love is!

I am oblivious of what goes on around me;
I know not what chores I have to accomplish;
Sleep and wakefulness have both forsaken me.
I hurl curses at Ranjha,
In my mind I offer prayers for him.
Ranjha and I are one;
Only people I put to test.
I am a sacrifice unto that wilderness,
Where abides my Beloved.
“Run not to forests,” says Bullah,
“Leave not your Lord aside.”

O Bullah, What do you know
what the essence of love is!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 43, poem 26

1. The implied meaning is that people do not know the reality of love.

THE FLEETING FOUR DAYS !

Our existence on this earth has been called a “four days’ stay” to signify its transitory nature. Man should realize this, and prepare himself for his inevitable journey to the hereafter. He should give up acting cruelly and foolishly. Instead, he should acquire compassion and wisdom. He should gather the wealth of good deeds to be of use to him in the next world. None will accompany him there, and he will have to be on his own to face his destiny.

In the last stanza, Bulleh Shah invokes the grace of the Lord to fight and vanquish his mighty enemy, his own mind. By himself he is too weak to win this fight.

Pyare bin maslahat utth jana

Dear, without achieving anything you will depart ;
It is high time that you learnt some wisdom.

You may make merry for the fleeting four days,
You will at last be humbled, for sure.
You act cruelly, You inflict suffering on people ;
Give up tormenting and agonizing others.
Dear, without achieving anything you will depart.

All those in whom you take such pride,
None of them will ever go with you.
Ever keep in view the city silent,
In that very city all have to abide.
Dear, without achieving anything you will depart.

The mighty one takes away boatsful of people,
The boatman called the Angel of Death.
People here are imperious, proud ;
I am the only humbled one, the only sinner.
Dear, without achieving anything you will depart.

Oh Bullah, the enemy¹ confronts you
 in the wilderness,
 Muster thou all your strength to vanquish him.
 May the Divine Beloved come to your help ;
 May He relieve you of the fear of death.

Dear, without achieving anything you will depart ;
 It is high time that you learnt some wisdom.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 67-68, poem 40

1. The mind, which is the main obstacle in spiritual realization.

THE GREAT TRICKSTER

The Lord comes to the world in disguise. He comes in the form of a Master. The reference in this *kafi* is obviously to Inayat Shah, the Master of Bullah.

Love entails much pain. But the lover would never give up this pain for any price. For, to be devoid of love is to be devoid of life. There is pain in love, but paradoxically there is pleasure in this pain.

Bulleh Shah says that he was born as a very sinful person, but through the practice of *Nam* and through the grace of his Master, he was able to wash away all his sins. *Nam* is the only treasure which man is able to take with him after death. All worldly goods one has to leave behind. He has, however, to keep a watch on the machinations of the Negative Power, who is ever on the lookout to lead him astray.

After realizing God within oneself, He is seen to pervade everywhere and in everyone. Such a realized soul makes no distinctions between castes and creeds. All parochial considerations cease to exist for him. Nor does he see any evil in any man, for he sees the divine behind every facade.

Bulleh Shah, then, brings out the functions of the ritualistic, the ethical, the metaphysical and the mystic aspects of religion.

Strange as it may seem, although the aim of human life is to attain spiritual realization, yet the one who attains it is forbidden to disclose the secret to others. The one who violates this principle meets the fate which Mansur met.

Great effort and sacrifice are the necessary prerequisites for attaining union with God. All those who

attained it had to practice the withdrawal of the soul from the body, and had to labor hard on the path. No one ever attained the great treasure without paying the requisite price for it.

At the end, Bulleh Shah once again reveals the Truth that for the one who has realized God within himself, the whole world is transformed. For, he begins to see God also in the world outside. In such a state only God exists, and the finite being with his own ego ceases to be.

Tuk bujh kaun chhup aya ei

Guess a little who has come in disguise !
How the trickster has put on a mask !

She who knows not the fact of pain,
Has never glanced into the city of love.
She is virtually dead, her life all waste.
O, why was she born of her accursed mother?
Guess a little who has come in disguise !

You have created me in the likeness of a canvas.
On it You have inscribed the cast of my figure ;
You have shown me on it with my face
all blackened.

And, what a deep black You have used
in Your coloring !

Guess a little who has come in disguise !

The Name of the Lord alone is the treasure ;
It is with the virtuous, as with the wicked.
His Name is bestowed through His own grace ;
But with it also is fear of the watchman.¹
Guess a little who has come in disguise !

1. Satan, the Devil, Kal.

Remove duality and do away with disputes.
 Are Hindus and Muslims other than He?
 Deem everyone virtuous, there are no thieves;
 For, within every body He himself resides.
 Guess a little who has come in disguise !

Why do you invent all kinds of stories?
 Why do you quote 'Gulistan'¹ and 'Bostan'?¹
 Why do you quarrel without rhyme or reason?
 Who has taught you the *Vedas*² perversely?
 Guess a little who has come in disguise !

Remember that *Shariyat*³ is our midwife;
 And *Tariqat*⁴ is like our mother;
 Then comes the part played by *Haqiqat*.⁵
 But, the real reward comes from *Marfat*.⁶
 Guess a little who has come in disguise !

I have a rare secret to disclose;
 You have to treasure it in your heart.
 Is there a way to know it?
 Why has the Lord made it a mystery?
 Guess a little who has come in disguise !

It is necessary to get this knowledge;
 But it is forbidden to disclose it.
 Whosoever revealed it, became a Mansur;
 He was seized and put on the gallows.
 Guess a little who has come in disguise !

I made no effort to work, to think and to discern.
 Bayazid attained mystic wisdom with much travail.
 He became the *Qura'n* incarnate through meditation.

1. Famous Persian classics of Sheikh Sa'di.

2. Sacred books of the Hindus.

3. The ritualistic aspect of religion; literally, the law.

4. The ethical aspect of religion; literally, the path, the way.

5. The metaphysical aspect of religion; literally, the essence, the truth.

6. The mystical aspect of religion; literally, knowledge.

None has realized Him without labor.
Guess a little who has come in disguise !

How long will you flee from this pain?
How long will you sleep before waking?
You will then cry when you wake up.
What ignorance has induced such slumber?
Guess a little who has come in disguise !

The form of *Ain*¹ and *Ghain*² is the same ;
There is the difference of only one dot.
If you can remove this dot from the heart,
You will realize '*Ain*' through '*Ghain*'.
Guess a little who has come in disguise !

So long as the other occupies the heart,
Who can say : "I have conquered my ego ?"
Inayat³ has filled my entire being,
And then come to be called Bullah.

Guess a little who has come in disguise !
How the trickster has put on a mask !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 86-92, poem 48

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1. & 2. In the Arabic/Persian/Urdu script they are written as ϵ and $\dot{\epsilon}$,
with the difference of just a dot. The esoteric meaning of the line is that
the Lord will be seen pervading the whole universe.
 3. Inayat Shah, the Master of Bulleh Shah.

THE INTOXICATED ONE

The Master is called in this *kafi* as the Intoxicated One, for he is intoxicated with the wine of divine love. Bulleh Shah calls his companions to meet his Master, who dyes everyone in the wine of divinity. He, then, adds that the Lord is not far. He abides right within us, near *Shah Rag* or the royal vein. To attain Him, one must withdraw his soul current from within the nine outlets and concentrate it at the eye center. The physical world is false and transient, and is the abode of sufferings. One must, therefore, try to escape from it, with the help of a Master, without whose aid one is lost in this labyrinth. The Master's helping hand has the support and the protection of the hand of the Lord.

Chalo dekhiye os mastanare nun

Let us go and see that Intoxicated One,
Whose fame has spread in the assemblages!

He is a dyer who dyes in the wine of union;
He does not ask to what caste you belong.
Whose tumult fills four corners of the world,
He is not distant, He is ever close.

He says: "I am near you through the royal vein."¹
"Within you are My signs; won't you heed them?"²

Leave this world of falsehood and delusion;
Plant within you the ecstasy of love.
They attain to the vision of the Beloved,
Who become blind, deaf and dumb.³

1. Sayings from the *Qura'n*

2. Ibid

3. Who have turned away from the world; esoterically, those who have been able to withdraw their soul current from the body (nine outlets of sensation) to the eye center.

It belongs not to you, it belongs not to me;
 This world is transient, full of quarrels.
 Who can lead you out of this mire,
 Except the guide, the perfect Master?
 Read, "I shall keep you, and you should keep me,
 in mind."¹

O Bullah, this mystic hint is of great import.
 Those embedded with the longing for His glimpse,
 They come to know the home of the great Hawker.²
 "The hand of God is above your hand."³

Let us go and see that Intoxicated One,
 Whose fame has spread in the assemblages!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat. pp. 106-107, poem 55

1. Sayings from the *Qura'n*.

2. The Lord.

3. The Master has the support of the Lord. This also is a saying from the *Qura'n*.

THE JEWEL MERCHANTS

Saints and masters have been metaphorically called the jewel merchants. They come to give precious stones to the world, but few are the customers who are prepared to buy them. The price for such jewels is the 'head' or life. Esoterically, it means that only those who are prepared to die while living can acquire this spiritual wealth. The process of dying while living is the process of withdrawing the soul current from within the body to the eye center. One who is afraid of a pin-prick, how can he be willing to withdraw the entire current of the soul from within the body—"I had not borne the prick of a needle, whereas they asked me for my head." The underlying idea is that people want to attain God-realization without paying any price for it—the price is the spiritual practice.

Sai vanjare aye ni maye

Those merchants¹ have come. O mother,
Those merchants have come.

They trade in gems;
They give a loud call to the customers.
I heard the call,
It came to my mind to buy some rubies.
I would put them in my ears,
And display them to the people.

I was raw.
I went to purchase them,
I knew not the intricacies of such a deal.

1. Saints and Masters, who come to the world to give people the wealth of spiritual realization. No money is involved, as they accept nothing for themselves.

Without any money, without much experience,
I went to acquire them.

When I asked them the price, they quoted it high.
I had not borne the prick of a needle,
Whereas they asked me for my head (ego).
Whosoever went to buy such precious merchandise,
Had to pay for it with his life.

Those merchants have come, O mother,
Those merchants have come.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 42

THE JOY OF DEATH

Renouncing all pleasures of life, Bullah takes to the life of a mendicant; but what he begs in alms is *darshan*¹ of his Beloved, his Master. No worldly attachments or temptations lure him any longer. The muezzin of love, and the arch before which he bows is the arch of his forehead, the seat of Nukta-i-Suvaida or the Third Eye. Death, says Bullah, which is terrible for the uninitiated is a source of joy for him. For, he has mastered the knack of vacating the body of his own will, and of coming back into it, which is tantamount to dying while living. On vacating the body he enjoys the delights of the astral world and the astral form of his Master. At the end of the poem he expresses his gratitude to his Master, Inayat Shah, through whose grace he was able to accomplish his task.

Aisi man mein ayo re

It so came into my mind,
That I bade good-bye to pleasure and pain.

Casting into fire all jewelry and brocades,
I put on a cloak to cover my body.
Despite such wisdom from sages and saints,
I miss the goal of Nam, but aim at other targets.
I coo like the *koel* night after night,
And still you have no compassion for me.

With deer skin round my neck,
And a *faqir's* vessel in my hand,
I set out to beg the alms of *darshan*.

1. A sight of, or vision of the Master.

And people, in error, call me a *jogan*,¹
 For I besmear my body with ash.

The muezzin of love has given his call,
 It's meet for me to hear his cry.
 I prostrate myself in all sincerity,
 With my face turned to the holy arch.²
 Strange are the ways of the love-city;
 I pass through death, filled with delight.

I myself got entangled in the snare;
 Smilingly I got slain in pleasure.
 O Bullah, in my deal of love with the Beloved,
 I have offered my body and soul as advance.
 I am beholden to my Master, Shah Inayat.
 He captivates my heart with his guiles.

It so came into my mind,
 That I bade good-bye to pleasure and pain.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 38-39, poem 24

1. A female jogi.

2. Arch of the forehead; refers to the third eye.

THE LORD IN DISGUISE

This world is compared to a fair, and the Lord in disguise comes to it as a Master. Bullah gives a call to people to recognize Him, and derive whatever benefit they can, while He is still here in flesh and blood.

In the last stanza Bullah urges the disciple not to be over-awed by public opinion, but openly acclaim the Master as the Lord.

Sain chhup tamashe nun aya!

The Lord has come to the fair in disguise!
Get together and meditate on His Name.

Longing for the Lord cannot remain a secret,
The whole world is burning in His love.
Do not go far from yourself to seek Him.
The Lord has come to the fair in disguise!
Get together and meditate on His Name.

Come friends! Form a spinning party;
Go and sit in a secluded corner;
And sing together praises of the Lord.
The Lord has come to the fair in disguise!
Get together and meditate on His Name.

O Bullah, this indeed is rather queer;
Why this veil when you've begun to dance?¹
Remove the cover from over your eyes.

The Lord has come to the fair in disguise!
Get together and meditate on His Name.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 139-140. poem 68

1. This is a typical Punjabi idiom. The dancer cannot sport a veil. Similarly a true lover of the Lord should be above all worldly considerations or criticisms.

THE LOVER

Bullah gives some criteria and some examples of a true lover in this lyric.

Love leads the lover to lose his identity in that of the Beloved. The lover is lost to himself, but he finds the Beloved, who is reached through the royal vein.

God is omnipresent. The same Lord is to be found in Heer as in Ranjha; but very few realize this truth. For those rare few who realize this, all quarrels and disputes disappear.

The mystic realization of the truth that the Lord pervades in everyone, comes to those who work hard at their meditation in early hours of the morning. (In the *Adi Granth* early morning time is called *amritvela* or the time for the dispensation of nectar of true Name.) They are bestowed the gift of divine light.

It was the Lord himself who made Mansur proclaim that he had become the Lord. By himself Mansur would never have made this declaration. And, then the Lord came in the form of orthodox priests to behead him.

In the last stanza Bullah states that the world in general judges the merit of people in terms of performance of rituals and customs, but God is happy only with the true spirit of religion and not its external observances. And it is through the grace of God that this realization can dawn on man.

Partalyo hun ashiq kehre ?

Have You now judged who Your true lovers are?

In the rapture of love I lost my senses,
But I found how near You are to me!

Near indeed You are through the royal vein.
Have You now judged who Your true lovers are?

Having come as Heer, I have again become Ranjha;
Rare is the one who knows this truth.
All disputes and wrangles stand resolved.
Have You now judged who Your true lovers are?

Fortunate are the ones who wake at night;¹
On them is bestowed the luminous light,
Compare their state with our sad plight.
Have You now judged who Your true lovers are?

You yourself made him proclaim: "I am the Truth,"
Mansur himself did not disclose this secret.
The priests strut towards him for nothing.
Have You now judged who Your true lovers are?

Bullah, rituals and customs act as judges;
But You, O Lord, are happy with the Truth.
In every house You settle disputes.

Have You now judged who Your true lovers are?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 63-64, poem 37

1. In the love of the Lord; in meditation.

THE MESSAGE-BEARER

In this love lyric, it seems, that the damsel was not satisfied by only giving a letter to be conveyed to her lover. This lovelorn girl apparently accompanies the messenger for some distance, and continues to impress upon him not to forget to mention this fact and that. She likes to make sure that he would not feel shy in describing her condition in detail. He can take her lover to one side and explain to him everything, and then return soon with his reply.

The poem successfully produces a vivid image of the situation.

Pandhya ho !

Bring soon the news of his well-being,
O message-bearer.

I have grown lean, I am bent with grief;
Narrate to him my long doleful tale,
The whole tale of my suffering,
O message-bearer.

I wander all around,
With dishevelled hair on my cheeks,
With the *Pranda*¹ in my hands—
Do not feel shy to describe my state to him.
O message-bearer.

With the blood of my heart,
I've written this inscription;
Explain it to him in a secluded corner,
O message-bearer.

1. Parti-colored yarn used by women for tying up their hair.

O Bullah, may the Beloved retrace his steps;
Take to him soon this letter of mine,
O message-bearer.

Bring soon the news of his well-being.
O message-bearer.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 21

THE NIGHT OF UNION

It is one of the few lyrics of Bulleh Shah, which is steeped in joy and bliss of union. It seems to be written soon after his attainment of mystic union with the Lord. And, he prays that the duration of this period should never end, or at least it should be indefinitely prolonged—"May I live with Him for millenia!" He has achieved this end after much endeavor and tribulation.

The second stanza speaks of the celestial music emanating from the Lord, which is all-enchanted. After hearing such a melody, all rituals and ceremonies lose their relevance--"Prayers and fasting are all forgotten."

The fourth stanza brings out the ecstatic joy of the mystic union, which makes the mystic oblivious not only of his surroundings, but even of himself—"I have no knowledge even of myself. What do I know where I've reached!"

The simile used and sustained throughout in the lyric is that of the newly-wedded bride and her nuptial union with her spouse. The bride says: "How to extend the length of this night? Place a wall against the day!" Marvelous in effect, the expression is so novel in conception!

The lyric builds an atmosphere of deep peace and profound bliss. It portrays a vivid picture of the mystic's state of trance, when he meets the radiant form of his Master and revels in the enchanting melody of the Word of God.

Gharyali dayo nikal ni

Turn away the watchman, O friends!

Today my Precious, my Beloved has come home.

Again and again he strikes the gong,
 And cuts he short the night of union.
 If he were to find my heart's desire,
 He would throw away the gong, O friends!
 Turn away the watchman, O friends!

The unstruck melody resounds sweetly.
 The Musician is accomplished, the tune enchanting,
 Prayers and fasting are all forgotten,
 When the Distiller offers the cup, O friends!
 Turn away the watchman, O friends!

Wondrous is the sight of His face!
 The pain of my heart has all vanished,
 How to extend the length of this night?
 Place a wall against the day, O friends!
 Turn away the watchman, O friends!

I have no knowledge even of myself;
 What do I know where I've reached!
 How can this fact remain a secret?
 Now has descended the perfect grace!
 Turn away the watchman, O friends!

I resorted to many a love-charm;
 Magicians of great renown did I call.
 Now the Beloved has come to my house.
 May I live with Him for millenia!
 Turn away the watchman, O friends!

The nuptial bed of the Spouse is dear.
 O friends, the Savior has redeemed me!
 With what an anguish my turn has come!
 Now it is hard ever to leave Him.
 Turn away the watchman, O friends!

Today my Precious, my Beloved has come home.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 228-230, poem 104

THE PAIN OF MY MAD LOVE

This short poem deals with the poignant pain involved in love. A lover is restless in separation from his beloved. Using the analogy of Heer and Ranjha, Bulleh Shah brings out the intensity of pain the disciple feels in separation from his Master. He implores upon his Master to forgive his faults and to end the period of separation--"Come, dear Ranjha, cast a glance at me, and forgive me my faults." The Master is not unaware of this pain felt by his disciple. In fact it comes as a gift from the Master--"From the throne of Hazara set out Ranjha, the master of artless Heer." The last two lines are in the form of a lover's complaint--"The Bridegroom visits the homes of all others, what is the flaw that bedevils Bullah?"

Mainun dard awallare di pir

I suffer from the pain of my mad love.

Come, dear Ranjha, cast a glance at me,
and forgive me my faults.

I suffer from the pain of my mad love.

From the throne of Hazara set out Ranjha,
the master of artless Heer.

I suffer from the pain of my made love.

The Bridegroom visits the homes of all others,
what is the flaw that bedevils Bullah?

I suffer from the pain of my made love.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 266, poem 121

THE REVERSE DIRECTION

There is a deep esoteric meaning hidden in this poem. The river Ganga signifies the soul, which, coming down from the eye center spreads in the whole body, down to the extremities. Now, in the process of meditation, the soul current is to be withdrawn to its source—“Reverse the direction of the flow of Ganga,¹ O Sadho!” From the eye center upwards the real spiritual journey commences, which culminates in the merger of the soul in the Lord. Repetition of holy names and contemplation on the form of the Master are instrumental in reaching the eye center, and holding the attention there. The whole practice should be done with love and devotion—“Take the cotton roll of love in your hand, and let not any knot be formed in it.” The Negative Power will create obstacles in the way, but they should be overcome with resoluteness.—“Kill the ten-headed monster.” The help of the Master is indispensable for reaching the spiritual destination—“This blessed state you will attain through the grace of your Master.”

Ulti ganga bahao re sadho!

Reverse the direction of the flow of Ganga, O Sadho!

Reverse the direction of the flow of Ganga, O Sadho,
for then you will behold the Lord.

Take the cotton roll of love in your hand,
let not any knot be formed in it.

The spindle of knowledge and the wheel
of contemplation are to move backwards.

1. Reverse the direction of the attention, up to the eye center.

If Kumbh Karan¹ were to retrace his steps,
 he would find the secret of Lanka.²
 Kill the ten-headed monster³ and save the life of
 Lakshman,
 Then the unstruck melody will ring.

When you attain to this blessed state,
 with the grace of your Master,
 Then alone will you deserve to be called his disciple.
 He will grant you the region of nectar,
 as will merge you in Him for ever.

Reverse the direction of the flow of Ganga, O Sadho,
 for then you will behold the Lord.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 26, poem 15

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1. Kumbh Karan, a character in *Ramayan*, who used to sleep for six months at a stretch. Here, it signifies the long inactivity of man in doing his meditation.
 2. Lanka here stands for the human body.
 3. Ravan, the ten-headed villain of the epic *Ramayan*. Here he stands for the ten senses, which have to be tamed to realize God.

THE SAFFLOWER BLOSSOMS

The safflower stands here for worldly wealth and luxuries, and attachments to our relatives and friends. These flowers are beautiful to look at, but have no fragrance. In fact, Sheikh Farid has written that they give a burning sensation to the hand which touches them. Also, the thorns surrounding them have been called fine, meaning that our attachments to our relatives are seemingly beautiful, but hide the suffering entailed in them. They are collected with great hardship and effort. But they become worthless at the time of death, because they do not accompany the dying man to the next world. Even during his lifetime they often bring pain and suffering in the form of strife and disease. They inflame our lower passions, and we become their slaves. Since they make us act in a sinful way, we suffer severe punishment at the hands of *Kal* and his agents—mind and the angels of death.

In the spirit of humility, Bullah states that others were tempted by only a few worldly pleasures (picked a few blossoms), but he fell prey to all (filled the whole of my basket).

In the last stanza Bullah strikes a happy note, and at the same time pays a handsome tribute to his Master, Inayat Shah. He says that despite his innumerable faults, his Master has saved him and made him worthy of the Lord.

Main kussumbra chun chun hari!

I am sick of picking safflower blossoms!

The thorns of this safflower are fine and sharp,
Again and again they tear my veil.¹

The lord² of this safflower is grim and stern;
And his accounts officer³ is a tyrant.

I am sick of picking safflower blossoms!

Four headmen⁴ control this safflower;
And they demand a heavy tax.

Others have picked a few blossoms;
I have filled the whole of my basket.

I am sick of picking safflower blossoms!

Picking incessantly I have built up a pile;
And many a merchant⁵ has come to buy.

The valley is steep, the journey is hard;
And I have a heavy load on my head.

I am sick of picking safflower blossoms!

“Am I not?”⁶ You said, when You set Your eyes
on me!

Why, O Beloved, have You now forsaken me?

We lived in the same house⁷ in mutual joy;

Why have I now been left deserted?

I am sick of picking safflower blossoms!

-
1. Stands for body. The line signifies that the body becomes wrinkled in old age because of worries and sorrows.
 2. *Kal*, the Negative Power.
 3. *Dharam Raj*, the Dispenser of Justice, *Kal's*, viceroy.
 4. *Manas* (mind), *chit* (reasoning faculty), *buddhi* (intellect that discriminates), *ahankar* (ego, individuality, pride).
 5. Business men who deal in virtuous deeds and actions of high moral value. They found that I had only safflower or worldly deeds, so they discarded my goods which I had to carry myself.
 6. At the time of creation, God said, “Am I not your Lord?” The soul said, “Yes”.
 7. Before the creation of the world the soul of man was with God.

I am mean, I am inept, I am ugly,
I am indeed devoid of all virtues;
I am not worthy of the Lord, O Bullah;
But my spouse, Inayat, has redeemed me!

I am sick of picking safflower blossoms!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 273-274, poem 126

THE SPELL OF LOVE

It is yet another of the lyrics of Bullah in which he has used the story of Heer and Ranjha to express his miserable state of separation from his Master.

In the first stanza Heer complains that after all his professions of steadfast love, Ranjha forsook her in her hour of trial (when her parents were forcibly marrying her to another man). When she is rebuked and ridiculed by her relatives, she pleads that she might be turned out of the house, if she is so undesirable.

In the second stanza there is a reference to the appearance of Ranjha in the guise of a yogi at the house of her in-laws. This brought about a union between the two lovers, although it was for a short time.

In the concluding stanza Bullah complains to the Lord for treating cruelly His unwavering lovers like Mansur. At the end of the stanza he declares that he is no longer affected by the sarcastic remarks of his critics— "...removed the blanket from his face."

Dekho ni ki kar gaya mahi !

Look, what the Beloved has done to me !
Exchanging hearts, he has forsaken me.

My mother scolds me, my father beats me;
My brothers inflict taunts on me.
Yes, I am bad ! I am wicked, O people !
Turn ye out this perverse woman !
Look, what the Beloved has done to me !

He sounded the conch at the door;¹
 I lost my sense, my reason.
 By God I swear, God only knows,
 In fun I was caught in the snare!
 Look, what the Beloved has done to me!

Stay, O Love, what a game you play!
 The like of Mansur² you put on the gallows.
 The same fortune has befallen Bullah,
 He has removed the blanket from his face.³

Look, what the Beloved has done to me!
 Exchanging hearts, he has forsaken me.

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, p. 133, poem 19

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1. Reference is to the story of Heer and Ranjha. When the parents of Heer married their daughter to Saida and she went to the Kheras at Rangpur, Ranjha went there in the guise of a yogi, sounded his conch there, and managed to take her with him.
 2. Mansur uttered the famous words "Analhaqq," "I am the Truth," for which he was executed.
 3. This is a typical Panjabi idiom, suggesting complete indifference to the taunts of the world. To remove blanket from the face, is to become shameless.

THE SPINNING WHEEL

Perhaps in the whole poetry of Bulleh Shah the most important symbol he employs is that of the spinning wheel. It stands for the physical frame of man; and spinning signifies the spiritual practice through which the soul is vacated from this frame to be collected at the eye center. For, it is only then that experience of the Divine is possible.

Using the analogy of the spinning wheel, Bullah graphically portrays the picture of an unmarried girl, whose mother admonishes her for her lack of interest in spinning. Since she got the wheel free, she does not realize its immense value (human birth is the only one out of 84 lakh species, in which union with the Lord can be attained.) The mother further impresses upon her not to idle away the precious opportunity in frivolous play, but to prepare herself for the house of her husband (the Lord), where she has to live permanently. Her parents' house (this world) is meant only for a short stay. Continuing her advice, the mother says that if she cannot spin all the cotton herself, she should get the help and guidance of her master (get it spun). Bullah, then, shifts to the analogy of the dowry and gives counsel to the girl to prepare her dowry properly—"Get Your wedding clothes dyed," so that she should not have to feel penitent when she reaches her husband's house.

Coming back to spinning. Bullah emphasizes on hard work—"Keep awake throughout the night, and work tirelessly on your wheel."

At the end, Bullah, in gratitude to his Master, declares that despite all his faults, the Master will safely ferry him across this phenomenal world at the time of departure from this world.

Kar kattan wall dhyan kure

Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

Your mother ever counsels you,
Why do you roam thus aimlessly ?
Do not forsake your modesty.
Heed the counsel, O ignorant girl !
Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

The spinning wheel you have got free.
You have paid nothing to obtain it.
You do not realize with what effort you got it,¹
When your task has become so easy.²
Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

This wheel is made for your sake.
Restrain a little your urge for play.
You are not going to grow further.
Do not act foolishly, O girl !
Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

Your wheel is of various colors;
It is the envy of the whole tribe.
Spin it while the going is good;
Get settled in your own house, O girl !
Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

This wheel has a heavy price !
Ye stupid, you know not its value.
You are haughty, you strut in conceit,
Lost in vanity, in pelf and pride.
Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

I shout, I cry with uplifted arms :
Do not at all be careless !

-
1. Human body is the reward of meritorious deeds of countless lives.
 2. When the time for release from the "wheel of eighty-four" has become possible.

Listen to me and understand !
 Never will such a wheel be fashioned
 By any other craftsman, O girl !
 Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

Why let you such a wheel go waste ?
 Why throw it on a heap of dust ?
 Ever since it came your way,
 You never plied it, O foolish girl !
 Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

I advise this silly, stupid girl,
 This foolish, queer and crazy girl,
 When misfortunes overtake this hapless one,
 You will lament in despair, O girl !
 Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

You have been ever ill-provided,
 Never did you spin a roll with attention.
 Why do you now roam sad and dejected ?
 On whom do you pin your hopes, O girl ?
 Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

You do not get your spindle straightened ;
 Nor do you get the wheel-string tightened.
 Time and again why stop you spinning ?
 You work your own ruin, O girl !
 Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

Get your curved spindle straightened.
 Quickly get your wheel-string fixed.
 Set it to work, somehow or other.
 Do not be negligent, O girl !
 Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

You have fresh cotton in the house today.
 You should quickly work the pin-rolls.
 Take the rolled cotton to get it whiffed.

Tomorrow you can't go there, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

When you return with whiffed cotton,
With friends you will spin cotton rolls.
You will be liked by one and all,
In the whole wide world, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

In your spinning party have all your friends.
Spun their cotton rolls and finished their work.
You sit idly, they goad you to spin.
Why do you keep sitting, and look at them dazed?
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

Light the lamp lying near you;
Spin the cotton, put it in the basket;
Keep awake throughout the night,
And work tirelessly on your wheel, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

The reign in your parents' house is of four days.¹
Do not waste it all in frivolous play,
Do not remain idle, do some work.
Let not your home go to ruin, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

Do not pass the night in slumber;
You will not come here the second time,
And sit again in this spinning party,
With friendly girls, of your age, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

You will not stay in the parental house for ever;
Nor always sit beside your fond mother.

1. Very short time.

You will bear the fire of separation one day,
And face your mother-in-law and sister-in-law,
O girl!

Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

Spin your yarn or get it spun.
Get your threads set in the warp.
Get your wedding clothes dyed.
Then alone will you earn respect, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

When you get to the house of strangers,¹
You will not come back again from there.
You will feel repentant on reaching there.
Make some provision beforehand, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

You have still so much to do!
Why have you grown so carefree?
What will you do at the last moment,
When the guests² reach your house, O girl?
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

When all your friends have departed,
They will not return from there at all;³
They will not set their wheels to spin.
Your spinning house will remain deserted, O girl!
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

Be not proud of your beauty and youth;
Tourists do not settle in a foreign land.⁴
Of this false, transient world,
No name or trace will be left behind.
Put your mind in spinning, O girl!

1. Strangers are people of the bridegroom's house.

2. Angels of death.

3. They will not return to this world after death.

4. This world is a foreign land for the soul.

Your testing time¹ will surely come,
When all near and dear ones will desert you.
But, at that time the Sultan² of Bullah
Will help you to be ferried across.

Put your mind in spinning, O girl !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 183-190, poem 87

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1. The time of death.
 2. The Master.

THE STORY OF CREATION

This lyric is reminiscent of the famous hymn of Guru Nanak, in which he has propounded his theory of Creation. (*Arbad narbad dhundukaara*):¹ "Through uncountable ages complete darkness prevailed over utter vacancy." In the same strain Bulleh Shah proclaims that in the beginning the One or the Absolute alone existed. He then manifested himself as God, who became an object of worship and adoration. Later still, He manifested himself as a Master or a *Murshid* in the form of a human being. However, in an unmanifest form He pervades His entire Creation. He is the essence of all that exists. If He were to withdraw himself from the universe, all this Creation would disintegrate and cease to exist.

The sixth stanza is reminiscent of another well-known hymn of Guru Nanak, in which he says: "At God's gate there dwell thousands of Mohammeds, thousands of Brahmas, of Vishnus, and of Shivas . . ." ² Bullah also says: "The *pirs* and prophets are His slaves. Men and angels prostrate themselves before Him."

In the last stanza, Bulleh Shah, paying a tribute to his Master, Inayat Shah, states that the above mystery would never be unraveled without the indispensable help of a Master.

Hun main lakhya sohna yar

I have now seen the fair Beloved,
Whose beauty shines through His creation.

1. Maru pp. 1035-1036.

2. Bhai Banno's *Adi Granth*, as translated by M.A. Macauliffe in *The Sikh Religion*, 1:40.

When the One existed all alone.¹
 No light of His was manifest.
 Nor did God or His prophets exist,
 Nor the Omnipotent or the Dominant.
 I have now seen the fair Beloved.

He was without a peer, without an equal.
 He was without a form, without a second.
 He was without a color, without a design.
 He now sports a thousand forms.
 I have now seen the fair Beloved.

The Dear One comes in different garbs.
 He has given himself the name of Adam.²
 From the One He has become Ahmad,
 The Chief of the prophets.
 I have now seen the fair Beloved.

He said "Be" and caused to be said, "It is."³
 Out of the formless He created the form.
 He inserted 'm'⁴ into Ahad,⁵
 And brought the universe into existence.
 I have now seen the fair Beloved.

I relinquish the mosque, I relinquish the temple.
 I know not the Hindu nor the Muslim fasts.
 I have forgotten ablutions and *dogana*⁶ prayers.
 I sacrifice my life unto You.
 I have now seen the fair Beloved.

1. Ahad = One, the Absolute.

2. The Absolute had not yet manifested Himself as God.

3. The first man. He is considered by Muslims as the first prophet.

4. Refers to the Day of Creation : *Qura'n* 2 : 117.

5. The insertion of 'm' into Ahad (One) forms Ahmad. This means that the One became manifest as human, and then by the fiat of God the universe came into being.

6. Bowing the body twice in prayers; a form of prayer among Muslims.

The *pirs* and prophets are His slaves ;
Men and angels bow before Him.
They place their head on His feet.
He is the greatest of all the lords.
I have now seen the fair Beloved.

He who wants to meet the Lord,
None can do so without a guide.
Inayat Shah revealed the secret ;
All the mysteries stood resolved.

I have now seen the fair Beloved,
Whose beauty shines through His creation.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 326-327, poem 152

THE TORMENT OF SEPARATION

It is another of Bulleh Shah's *kafis* depicting the state of torment in separation from the Beloved. One has to pay a heavy price for love. He has to offer his head as earnest money, says Bullah.

Those who have done their spiritual practice are able to cross the ocean of this world. The Lord in His grace, redeems the sinners also.

In the last stanza, there is a powerful appeal to the Lord to grant the one who has forsaken his relatives and friends, His union.

Kadi a mil birhon satai nun !

Come some time and meet the one,
tormented in your separation !

If you were to fall in love, you would weep and cry.
What do you know of the pain of others ?
Whoever seeks to strike the bargain of love,
He should first offer his head as earnest.
The doers¹ have all crossed one by one ;
My honor is in the hands of the Beloved.
The flood of grief, the waves of distress—
In what a calamity you have thrown me !
My parents I forsook ! My friends I ignored !
I am a sacrifice to you ! For God's sake, come !

Come some time and meet the one,
tormented in your separation !

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 176, poem 83

1. Those who practiced meditation and spiritual concentration.

THE WAGES OF LOVE

The underlying idea of the poem is Bulleh Shah's favorite theme of the high price one has to pay for love. The pain of love cannot be described; it can only be experienced—"He alone knows who has experienced love." In the mood of love's complaint, Bullah asks himself if he gained anything out of love—"Rebukes within and taunts without: Such is the comfort I found in love!" The second stanza continues in the same strain—"My eyes are engaged in pouring out tears! It brings me death and the people's reproach. Helplessly caught in the grip of yearning, O, I've become a wretch by ceaseless weeping."

The third stanza rises to spiritual heights, in which Bullah compares his achievement to that of Mansur—"I have drunk the cup of that Truth, which Mansur had quaffed to the dregs." This happy change in mood continues in the fourth and fifth stanzas, where the pain of separation melts away into the bliss of union. The last two lines are a tribute to his Master, who has been the instrument for bringing about his union with the Lord.

Mere mahi kyon chir laya ei?

O, my Beloved, why do You tarry?

Narrate now, O Bullah, your love story.

He alone knows who has experienced love.

Rebukes within and taunts without:

Such is the comfort I found in love!

O, my Beloved, why do You tarry?

My eyes are engaged in pouring out tears!

It brings me death and the people's reproach.

Helplessly caught in the grip of yearning,
O, I've become a wretch by ceaseless weeping.
O, my Beloved, why do You tarry?

I have drunk the cup of that Truth,
Which Mansur had quaffed to the dregs.
When I had a glimpse of the Ascension,¹
With water from the fountain² I made ablutions.
O, my Beloved, why do You tarry?

The muezzin of love has given his call,
He has brought the news of the coming of the Lord.
I too have come to prostrate before Him.
O friends, I kiss the pedestal of the Lord.³
O, my Beloved, why do You tarry?

O Bullah, cherish the fragrance of the Lord.
And embellish yourself when you go to Him.
Come and let me behold you, my Master,
You, who have made me one with my Spouse.

O, my Beloved, why do You tarry?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 248-249, poem 114

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1. The ladder upon which the souls ascend when they vacate the body.
 2. *Chashma-i-Khizr*, the fountain of life.
 3. The Imam leads the prayers in the mosque, and all others look towards the niche in the wall.

THE WAY OF LOVE

It is another of the many *kafis* of Bulleh Shah, which recounts the trials and tribulations that the famous lovers of God had to suffer. Job was made to lose not only his wealth and worldly possessions, but also his health. He was stricken with a foul disease, and his body was infested with worms. Satan offered to restore everything to him, if he gave up his love for the Lord, but Job firmly declined. Zacharias' head was cut off with a saw as the price of his love of God. The head of John the Baptist was severed with a dagger. Mansur al Hallaj was made to mount the Cross. Solomon who held sway even over the fairies and was called The Wise, was made to lose the signet ring which gave him the magic power. He had to put fagots into the oven of a grain-parcher. He suffered all these hardships for the sake of love.

In the last stanza Bullah says that it is better to keep one's mouth shut and not boast of one's bravado in the face of all that these great lovers of God suffered.

Es niunh di ulti chal!

Perverse is the way of this love!

When Job was inflamed with love,
See, what the Beloved had in store for him!
Within every vein he had worms crawling.
Such is the Will of the Omnipotent!
Perverse is the way of this love!

When Zacharias made the mighty revelation,
When love was proclaimed with the beat of drum,

Then a sharp saw was placed over his head,
 And it came down with a heavy thud!
 Perverse is the way of this love!

When John¹ had vision of the Beloved within,
 The hint of love worked the dagger;
 Though God gave a glimpse of His own effulgence,
 The dagger was stained red with his blood!
 Perverse is the way of this love!

When the Lord made a sign with His eyes,
 Then drank Mansur the wine of love.
 When mounting the gallows he saw the Beloved,
 Then love had reached its consummation!
 Perverse is the way of this love!

When Solomon was visited by love,
 He lost the signet ring from his hands;
 The throne of the fairies then never came.
 He fed the oven with fagots and lay restless.
 Perverse is the way of this love!

O Bullah, you better keep silent now,
 And do not brag about your valor!
 You cannot convince the world on this,
 Leave all debate and argument alone!

Perverse is the way of this love!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 32-33, poem 20

1. John the Baptist.

THE WONDROUS SADHU

Enamored of the mystic who has realized the Lord, Bullah does not know how to describe him adequately. He calls him 'the wondrous Sadhu,' because he transcends the parochial distinctions of caste and creed. For him there is no difference between the Muslim and the Hindu, because each of them becomes sublime by listening to the unstruck divine melody, although each gives it a different name. Such a one sees the Lord pervade everywhere and in everyone.

Eh achraj sadhu kaun kahave?

What shall we call this wondrous sadhu?
Moment after moment he takes on a new form.

He talks of Mecca and Lanka, and reveals
the same secret behind both!
O yogi, when you'll unite with the Lord,
the *bang*¹ and *nad*¹ will mean the same.
To know the meaning of devotion and devotee,
He indeed is a devotee who pleases His heart.
See the Lord manifest everywhere,
Wherefore do you read the *Vedas*, O pundit?
Look attentively, there is none an infidel,
Whether you call him a Hindu or a Muslim.
Wherever I look, Him alone I see.
O Bullah, He pervades in every color.

What shall we call this wondrous sadhu?
Moment after moment he takes on a new form.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 35, poem 22

1. He removes the difference of both, which mean unstruck sound.

THE WORKS OF LOVE!

This is another of the poems of Bullah in which the cruelties perpetrated on lovers of God are enumerated. Mention is made here of Abraham, Zacharias, Yusuf, Sheikh Suna'n, Shams of Tabriz and Mansur of Hallaj. "Is it now my turn?" asks Bullah.

In the last stanza the counsel is given to the lover to make his body a furnace and his mind an anvil for hard blows to be given on it by the hammer of love to melt the iron heart.

Kyon ishq asan te aya ei?

Why, O love, have you come to me?

You have come to me! I have found you out!

You made Abraham to be thrown onto the pyre;
You made Zacharias' head to be put under the saw;
You made Yusuf to be sold from shop to shop.
Say, now, what are your designs upon me?
Why, O love, have you come to me?

You made Sheikh Suna'n to graze pigs.
You made Shams to be flayed alive.
You made Mansur to climb the gallows.
And, now, with outstretched hands
 you advance towards me;
Why, O love, have you come to me?

Whichever house you designed to visit,
It was reduced to a heap of ashes.
When the ashes blew you felt pleased.¹
Say, what do you aspire in your plans?
Why, O love, have you come to me?

1. It is said that the ashes of Mansur, after execution, were blown away by high winds.

O Bullah, for the sake of your Beloved,
Make your body a furnace and your mind an anvil;
Then give blows with the hammer of love;
The iron heart will melt with the heat of fire!

Why, O love, have you come to me?
You have come to me! I have found you out!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 198-199, poem 92

THE WORLD AS A FAIR

There is a custom among Muslims to gather at the grave of a holy man and play on drums and other musical instruments to celebrate his memory. Such a gathering is called *chhinj* or a *durbar*. The sports-tournament where side by side wrestling bouts and other competitions are held, where drums are beaten and other musical instruments are played, is also called *chhinj*.

The different verses of the poem are not particularly well-related. But, in general, we can understand from the *kafi*, that the world is a fair or a bazaar, where people assemble to make merry. But, the metaphor changes, and the world is likened to a farm, where people sow good and bad seeds in the form of good and bad deeds. This metaphor points to the theory of karmas, according to which we reap the award of our deeds in this world.

The poet does not find this bazaar worth staying in, for everything in it is inclined to change and perish: the young man perishes, the old man perishes. He cherishes the hope that in the world to come--"look for another bazaar" the state of affairs would be quite different and much better.

Khalq tamashe ai yar !

People have come to this pleasure-ground, O friend !

What have you done today? What will you
do tomorrow?

What use has been your coming?

What a field you have sown, that the sparrows
have all ruined it!

On the one hand, there is reproach from the Friend,
 on the other, there is the world;
 Disrepute and disgrace will remain in the world;
 Take off your turban¹ and hurl it on the ground.

The young man perishes, the old man perishes,
 each in his own turn.
 Whether it be the mistress or her maid,
 The washer-woman or the inn-keeper's wife,
 each will perish.

Bullah goes to see the Lord who himself provides
 an excuse.
 He kneads clay to make pots, and then He breaks
 them into pieces.
 Having seen this display, move on,
 and look for another bazaar².
 What an uproar of din and gaiety in this *durbar*!

People have come to this pleasure-ground, O friend!
Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 35

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1. Turban is a sign of respect. Here the expression means that you should give up the false fear and regard of society.
 2. The world hereafter.

THIEF IN THE FOLD OF MY CLOAK

That the Lord is within, and people in ignorance seek Him outside, is the theme of this poem. They identify themselves with the religious groups in which they happen to be born, and thereby imprison themselves in narrow, parochial rituals--"Somewhere He is Ram Das, somewhere Fathe Mohammed. This indeed is the ancient uproar!" The external observances of different religious groups are different, and people belonging to them quarrel over these superficial differences-- "The Muslims are averse to being cremated; the Hindus are loath to be buried. Both die quarreling over this wrangle." When they discover the Lord within themselves, their foolish wrangles come to an end. For, then they see the same Lord abiding within everyone.

The fifth stanza reveals that his Master, Inayat Shah, belonged to the Qadiri group of Sufis, and the first Master came from Baghdad--"The Master of masters belonged to Baghdad."

Meri bukkal de vich chor

In the fold of my cloak hides the beloved Thief,
To whom shall I complain?

Stealthily He escaped,
And a tumult arose in the world.

The Muslims are averse to being cremated;
The Hindus are loath to be buried.
Both die quarreling over this wrangle.
Such is the cause of enmity between them!

Somewhere He is Ram Das, somewhere
 Fateh Mohammed,
 This indeed is the ancient uproar!
 Their quarrel came to an end,
 When someone else made His appearance.

Calls came from the resplendent heavens;
 They were heard at the throne of Lahore.¹
 King Inayat has fixed the net
 And, on the sly, pulls the cord.

Whosoever searched for Him, found Him.
 He did not have to suffer dejection.
 The Master of masters belonged to Baghdad;
 My own Master adorned the throne of Lahore.

O ye, all, join me to shout:
 He himself the kite, He is himself the string;
 I disclose His whereabouts, you go and catch
 The beloved Thief belonging to Bulleh Shah.

In the fold of my cloak hides the beloved Thief.
 To whom shall I complain?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 260-262, poem 118

1. Where Inayat Shah lived.

TO ADMONISH BULLAH

There are few examples in literature, where a classic poem depicts a true incident of life. This one is an exception, for it is not only good poetry, but is also related to an important episode in Bullah's life. When he became a disciple of Inayat Shah, his relatives, proud of their high caste, considered it not only an insult to themselves, but also to the Prophet and his apostle Ali, from whom they traced their descent.

The only answer that Bullah gave to the complaints and taunts of his relatives, was that he was prepared to forfeit his right to be called a high caste *Sayyiad*, and would prefer to be called an *Arain*, the so-called low caste of his Master. Nevertheless, he advises his critics to treat this incident as an act of God's Will. What Bullah really wishes to convey is that God in His supreme Will can bestow the gift of divine knowledge to anyone He likes. He showers at times such honor on people of low worldly status, and keeps men of high position away from Him.

Bulleh nun samjhawan ayian bhainan te bharjaian

To admonish Bullah came his sisters and sisters-in-law.

“Abide by our advice, and leave the hem of the
*Arain's*¹ skirt.

Why have you brought disgrace to the Prophet
and to the progeny of Ali?”

1. A caste among Muslims employed in gardening, especially vegetable gardening. Here it refers to his Master.

“Let anyone who calls me a *Sayyiad* be punished
 with the tortures of hell;
 And let him revel in the pleasures of heaven,
 who labels me an *Arain*.”

Arain, the Lord, pervades everyone,
 and He is all-powerful.
 He casts away the fair ones, and clasps to His heart
 the meritless ones.

If you seek the pleasures of the spring,¹
 become ye a slave of the *Arain*.
 Wherefore do you ask the caste of Bullah?
 Be contented in His Will.

To admonish Bullah came his sisters and sisters-in-law.
Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 19

1. Here spring season is indicative of supreme spiritual bliss, which is attained only through the perfect Master.

TRANSIENT LIFE

This poem is in the nature of a warning to man about the transitory character of life. During the short span of human existence, it is incumbent upon man to accomplish the task for which the human form has been given to him. The world has been compared to a caravanserai, where the duration of stay is only for a night.

The third stanza serves as a reminder about the divine nature of man. He comes from God, "who is our home", and he should not commit the blunder of making this mundane world as his permanent abode.

The last stanza holds out the assurance that the goal to be achieved by man is not as difficult, as he falsely believes.

Tain kit par paon pasara ei?

On what have you spread your feet?
It will last but a fleeting moment.

For the winking of an eye, this fair will last;
Do something, your time is short.
This day, this minute, is a rare occasion.
On what have you spread your feet?

This is a caravanserai;
The stay here is for one night.
In vain it is to bluster,
In this short, brief respite.
Tomorrow the departure call will come.
On what have you spread your feet?

You have come from that origin divine,
Why do you stay here as a mortal?

Bid good-bye to this assembly;
What concern have you with it?
On what have you spread your feet?

You harbor under a grave delusion,
You carry a huge mountain on your head.
This is not the road, the path,
O Bullah, to your destination.

On what have you spread your feet?
It will last but for a fleeting moment.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 84-85, poem 47

TRUE LOVE HAS BEGUILED ME

The contrast between love and reason as paths leading to God-realization is the theme of this poem. Love gives a direct experience of God and of the bliss it entails. Learning and reason, on the other hand, lead to confusion, and are devoid of immediate knowledge. They also lack the intensity of direct experience--"All this leaves me devoid of Him!"

Also, rituals, customs and external observances are quite futile in the path of God-realization--"Of what use are fasts and prayers to them, who have drunk deep from the font of love?"

The last stanza stresses the importance of the presence of the Master, which acts as the liberating force from the sorrows of life--"Sitting in the company of the Spouse, Bullah is free from all rituals."

Ishq haqiqi nein muthhi kure

True love has beguiled me, O friend!
Reveal to me the land of my Beloved.

At my parents' I was an innocent maid.
With His love He robbed me of my heart!
Take me to the land of my Beloved,
O, lead me to the realm of my Lord.

Logic, grammar and my store of knowledge —
All this leaves me devoid of Him!
Show to me the land of my Beloved;
O, take me to the place of my Lord.

Of what use are fasts and prayers to them,
Who have drunk deep from the font of love?
Disclose to me the land of my Beloved;
O, lead me to the realm of my Lord.

Sitting in the company of the Spouse,
Bullah is free from all rituals.
Show to me the land of my Beloved,
O, take me to the realm of my Lord.

True love has beguiled me, O friend!
Reveal to me the land of my Beloved.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 160, poem 77

TRUTH CANNOT BE WITHHELD

This is one of the best known *kafis* of Bulleh Shah. It is indeed one of his greatest poems. To declare what is true, and to remain steadfast on it with all courage, is the main theme of this *kafi*. The obstacles that one encounters in speaking out truth--"If I speak out the truth, there is a blaze," out of fear and expediency, have hardly ever been expressed with such force by any other poet. The reluctance to express himself through fear and expediency has been well expressed by him in the words "Haltingly my tongue speaks out."

It is another matter that the truth on which Bulleh Shah insists, is the truth that the Creator and His creation are not separate--"O Bullah, the Lord is not apart from us," and that He resides within man himself--"Enter within and see who is there." Apart from this basic spiritual truth, Bulleh Shah emphatically asserts the moral principle that notwithstanding all the difficulties involved in the declaration of truth, one should not hesitate to do so.

This world is characterized by darkness of ignorance, and is called a "slippery courtyard" because its alluring temptations are a constant danger in the path of God-realization.

As in many other poems of his, Bulleh Shah sees, in the present *kafi* too, the Lord to be present in everyone--"Somewhere You display grace and elegance. Somewhere as a prophet You effect union. Somewhere You come in the form of a lover. Somewhere You endure the pangs of parting."

Munh ai bat na raihndi ei

Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

If I tell a lie, something is left out;

If I speak out the truth, there is a blaze.

My mind fears both the alternatives;

But haltingly my tongue speaks out.

Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

Respect and regard to all is essential,

But I know the inner reality of all.

In everyone there dwells the form of the Lord.

In some it is manifest, in some it is latent.

Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

Whosoever found the secret from the mystic,

He searched for the path within himself.

He is a blissful dweller of that temple,

Which knows neither rise nor fall.

Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

Here, in this world, darkness prevails.

This world is a slippery courtyard.

Enter within and see who is there.

In vain do the foolish seek Him without.

Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

Here the world has been made manifest.¹

It has a strange secret of its own.

From a single Form a flash bursts forth,

Even as a spark ignites gunpowder.

Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

Somewhere You display grace and elegance.

Somewhere as a prophet You effect union.

Somewhere You come in the form of a lover.

1. Literally, here the account has spread its feet.

Somewhere You endure the pangs of parting.
Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

When the Light made itself manifest,
Mount Sinai was burnt to ashes.
Then Mansur mounted the gallows.
Neither You nor I can dare to boast.
Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

If I were to unravel the mysteries,
People would forget all disputation.
They would then kill our friend Bullah,
For only a veiled expression befits here.
Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

We have acquired much verified knowledge,
But only one letter¹ is true in it.
All other disputation is futile.
In vain does the world raise a tumult!
Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

O Bullah, the Lord is not apart from us.
Other than the Lord none does exist.
Alas! we do not have the seeing eye.²
That's why life is a tale of suffering.

Words that come on my tongue cannot be held back.

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, pp. 246-249, poem 70

1. *Alif*, the letter for *Allah*. It symbolizes the unity of God.
2. The inner or the third eye.

TRUTH SUBMERGED

The truth about God is the Experience of God within. Customs, rituals and external observances that grow around an institutionalized and organized religion take man away from true religion. And, yet, religion is generally practiced in terms of its customs and rites. Since they differ from religion to religion, they have produced divisions and factions among men. On the other hand, the mystic experience, being identical in all men, has brought men close to God and to one another. If the same Divine Being is perceived within everyone, no scope is left for rift and strife--"Through the Royal Vein God is not far. People have for nothing raised a turmoil." All those who seek God outside in temples and mosques, they waste their time--"In vain pursuits life has been wasted."

Gall raule lokan pai ei

People have drowned the truth in din.

Tell the truth, O mind; why do you fear?

With this truth you will swim across.

Truth always leads to joy and prosperity.

Truth comes as a wondrous thing.

People have drowned the truth in din.

Through the Royal Vein God is not far.

People have for nothing raised a turmoil.

Who can settle all these quarrels?

In vain pursuits life has been wasted.

People have drowned the truth in din.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 65

TURN TO ME

This poem suggests some incident which annoyed Bulleh Shah's Master with him. It is full of entreaties for his forgiveness, for any lapse he may have committed. He is not quite aware of the fault, but he makes it clear that he cannot bear the separation—and annoyance—of his Master—"When will he quench the fire raging within me?"

The decorated bride who fails to catch the attention and win the favor of her husband is symbolic of a man with worldly position and wealth, but without any love for God and grace from Him--"My adornment, my embellishment has gone waste."

Kadi mor muharan dholya

Turn your bridle to come to me, Love.

My life is a sacrifice unto your path.

My adornment, my embellishment has gone waste;

A knot has been twined in my Beloved's heart.

Did I utter something outrageous?

Turn your bridle to come to me, Love.

My life is a sacrifice unto your path.

O Bullah, when will the Beloved return home?

When will he quench the fire raging within me?

Anguish has opened its mouth to devour me.

Turn your bridle to come to me, Love.

My life is a sacrifice unto your path.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 177, poem 84

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The multiplicity of things and forms in this world is superficial. For, behind the many there is the One that pervades them all. The multiplicity that one perceives is only appearance. The unity that is realized behind it is Reality.

Bullah has used three analogies in this *kafi* to convey this truth. The first one is of cotton. There is a variety of cloth and garments and they are in different colors. But they are all made from the same fiber of cotton. The second example is of silver. Various are the ornaments that are made from silver, and which adorn women, but the reality of them all is silver. Lastly, Bullah gives a hint that all prophets come from God, though they come in different forms. Jesus Christ came as a shepherd, Mohammed came as the protector of camels, and Krishna came as a cowherd. Not only the external form of these redeemers of mankind was different, but also the appearance of all human beings varies. However the reality hidden behind them all is the same. They are all sparks of the same Divinity.

Sab ikko rang kapahin da

There is only one thread of all cotton.

The warp, the woof, the quill of the weaver's shuttle,
The shuttle, the texture of cloth, cotton shoes
and hanks of yarn,

All are known by their respective names.
And they all belong to their respective places,
But there is only one thread of all cotton.

Cloth with four to five hundred threads in its width,
Coarse cotton cloth as well as fine cotton cloth.

Muslins fine and exquisite, are all made of one Yarn.
 And, when for the mendicant it comes out of the roll,
 It takes on the form of ocher-colored garb for him.
 But there is only one thread of all cotton.

The hands of girls are embellished with rings of silver,
 All ornaments have their own respective names,
 But call them all by the one name of silver,
 Be they bracelets for forearms or bangles for wrists.
 There is only one thread of all cotton.

The one who tends and grazes goats and sheep,
 Also comes to protect camels and buffaloes.
 He, then, begins to feed donkeys on rubbish-heaps,
 And, he is the one who becomes a herdsman of cows.
 There is only one thread of all cotton.

O Bullah, why should you ask
 the caste of the Spouse?
 You should be grateful in whatever He deigns to will.
 If you wish to seek the joys of spring,
 Become a slave of the *Arain*.¹

There is only one thread of all cotton.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 143-144, poem 70

1. Inayat Shah, the Master of Bulleh Shah. *Arain* literally means a vegetable grower or a cultivator of lands. Inayat Shah was *Arain* by caste—much inferior to *Sayyids*. Bullah was a *Sayyid*. But, regardless of his high descent from the Prophet, he became a disciple of Inayat Shah.

WAKE UP, DEAR TRAVELER

This poem forcefully brings out the transitory nature of this world. People come in and go from this world, as if it were a wayfarers' inn. The cycle of transmigration is unending. Those who die give a clarion call to others, that their turn is coming. But they pay no heed, thinking that death is meant for others and not for them.

Bulleh Shah stresses that the human body is full of invaluable treasures including the Lord himself, and yet man suffers from colossal ignorance. He searches for Him outside—in temples and mosques—when He is right within him.

In the last stanza Bulleh Shah impresses on the seeker the indispensability of a living Master, without whose help and guidance the precious opportunity of human life will be irretrievably lost without realizing the Lord.

Rain gai latke sab tare!

The night is over! The stars have waned!

Wake up at least now, you dear traveler!

This is your camping place in a caravanserai,

Where people come and go ceaselessly.

All your fellow travelers are ready to leave;

Still you do not hear the clarion call.

Wake up at least now, you dear traveler!

Act now, it's time for action today;

For you will not come here another day.

Your companions give you repeated calls;

Wake up at least now, you dear traveler!

Everyone runs to his land,

Whether a rich or a poor man.

But you should secure the profit of *Nam*.
Wake up at least now, you dear traveler!

Pearls, jewels and the philosopher's stone,
All of these are so near you.
Near you is the ocean vast and wide,
And you are still dying of thirst.
Open your eye, and sit ye up O beggar.
Wake up at least now, you dear traveler!

Fall at the feet of Your Master, O Bullah.
Leave indolence aside, and set yourself to work.
Without your waking, without your vigilance,
The deer¹ will lay waste your fields.

Wake up at least now, you dear traveler!

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, pp. 85-86, poem 2

1. 'Deer' stands for time which is nimbly grazing the field of life.

WALK INTO MY COURTYARD

The poem is an entreaty by the disciple to his Master to come to his house, whether he knows the miserable state of his mind or does not know it. Bulleh Shah using the analogy of Heer and Ranjha points out that just as Ranjha was only a herdsman in the eyes of the world, but he was the very life and breath of Heer, so also Inayat Shah was a mere vegetable grower for the world, but he was all in all for Bullah. And, just as Heer left her parents for the sake of Ranjha, similarly Bullah would give up the world to secure Inayat Shah.

Bhanven jan na jan

Whether you know it or not, pray walk
into my courtyard!

I am a sacrifice unto you, pray walk
into my courtyard!

There is no one like you for me;
I have searched forests, jungles and deserts.
Indeed, I have searched the whole world;
Pray walk into my courtyard!

For the common people you are a herdsman;
I call you Ranjha in the presence of others;
But, you are my very faith and creed, Beloved;
Pray walk into my courtyard!

I abandoned my parents to hold your hand,
O my beloved king Inayat.
Now honor this bond of love,
for I am entirely in your hands.
Pray walk into my courtyard!

I am a sacrifice unto you, pray walk
into my courtyard!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p.55, poem 32

WEARY OF SPINNING

The central idea of this poem is that a maiden has become weary of spinning, and she is thoroughly bored with it. When the thread while spinning gets broken, she is happy, for it gives her a welcome excuse to leave the monotonous chore of spinning and indulge in the pleasures of love.

The esoteric significance of the poem is that the seeker of God loses interest in his worldly activities, and becomes immersed in the love of the Lord. It may also mean that mere rote repetition or a sheer mechanical meditation, devoid of love and devotion, is of no interest to the practitioner.

The poetic beauty of the *kafi* comes out in the vivid description of how sometimes one and sometimes another part of the spinning wheel gets out of order, when the heart of the spinner is not in the job.

Bhainan! main katdi katdi hutti

Sisters! I have got tired of spinning.

My straw basket and my *pihri*¹ have been left behind
in the backyard;

In my hands has remained a pair of cotton rolls.

In front of me is the spinning wheel, behind me
is the low stool;

And the thread has snapped in my hands.

While spinning, the spindle has fallen,

The leather-rests have got entangled,
and the thread is broken.

It's well that my spinning wheel is broken;

My life has been spared the torture.

1. A kind of low seat without a back, a low stool.

Of what interest is dowry to one,
 who holds the cup of love in her hand?
O Bullah, the Beloved has made me dance,
And the tempo of the dance increased
 with every step.

Sisters! I have got tired of spinning.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 20

WHAT DO I KNOW OF SOMEONE?

The 'Someone' in this *kafi* could either be God or the Master. The first line of the first stanza seems to point to God; the second line would fit better with the Master or the *Murshid*.

The second stanza hints at the fact that life is full of pain and suffering. And, this suffering will end only when death comes.

The third stanza brings out the helplessness of man in shaping his life and affairs. All is in the hands of God, and man should cheerfully accept what comes as his destiny.

The fourth stanza points to the pain involved in separation from the Beloved. The lover, in his intense longing, suffers like a sheep in the hands of a butcher.

In the last stanza, Bullah expresses gratitude to the Lord, who bestowed on him. His love, and who sent Inayat Shah to the world as his Master.

Kih janan main koi!

What do I know of Someone, O friend?
What do I know of Someone?

The One who speaks within me,
He indeed is my essence.
I have become verily like Him.
With whom I have fallen in love.

The ring-dove coos, the fawn does wail;
They have collars round their necks.
They cease not from cooing and wailing;
In death alone their suffering will end.

Whatever happens, 'tis the will of God;
In it the poor mortals have no say.

What is written on my forehead as destiny,
I am contented and grateful for it all.

In separation from the Beloved,
The lover, in his intense longing,
Suffers like a sheep in the hands of a butcher.

O Bullah, the Lord has been merciful;
He has favored you with the wine of love.
Through His grace you have been released
From suffering by His coming as Inayat.¹

What do I know of Someone, O friend?
What do I know of Someone?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 212-214, poem 98

1. Bulleh Shah's Master.

WHIMS OF LOVE

This poem is said to be related to a specific occasion. Bulleh Shah, in a moment of indiscretion, displeased his Master. To win him back, Bullah danced in the guise of a woman in a group of *qawwals*.¹

In a mood of playfulness Bullah complains that not much faith can be put in the reciprocity of love from the Beloved. No longer can he boast of such steadfast love, because the Beloved can forsake him at will.

That the ways of the Beloved are strange and inscrutable, is expressed by Bullah in the words: "You ferry across the vain and the conceited, and You ignore those who follow You in spite of the insults and disgrace You hurl at them." Again, "You dance with those who are soiled, and shun those who are adorned with jewelry." So, says Bullah, "who can understand Your ways?"

And yet in the midst of these complaints, the longing of Bullah for the Beloved does not decrease—"Today, only for tonight, stay in my house, O Friend," he says "Undo the knots of Your heart and let the old love revive. You had promised to come; do not tax my faith in Your promise."

The last two lines denote a change of mood. Bullah gets a call from the house of the Lord to have His vision. These lines are supposed to point to the moment of conciliation, the moment when Inayat Shah recognizes Bullah in the guise of the dancing girl, and forgives him for his lapse.

1. Literally, a *qawwal* means one who speaks well or fluently. Here it stands for a kind of musician who sings, usually accompanied by an instrument. Generally, there is a group of *qawwals* with one of them as its leader.

Vatt na karsan man Ranjhete yar da ve arya!

Never again shall I boast of the beloved Ranjha,
O friend!

Love is the essence of the Lord;
It is taunts of the people.
Before whom should I wail?
None will live for ever.
His secret He alone knows;
Who else can vaunt, O Friend!
Never again shall I boast of the beloved Ranjha,
O friend!

Today, only for tonight,
Stay in my house, O Friend!
Undo the knots of your heart
And laugh with me, O dear!
O dear Friend, you had made a promise to me.
What trust can I put in the Beloved, O friend?
Never again shall I boast of the beloved Ranjha,
O friend!

I have sacrificed my life,
Still you do not disclose the secret, O Friend!
I have sought you several times,
Every time you run away from me, O Friend!
The friends together go about inquiring,
If the time for spinning has arrived; O Friend!
Never again shall I boast of the beloved Ranjha,
O friend!

Some are vain and self-conceited,
Those you ferry across, O Friend!
Some, insulted and disgraced, follow you;
You burn the burnt over again, O Friend!

O my beautiful, beloved Friend,
 What faith can I have in your love?
 Never again shall I boast of the beloved Ranjha,
 O friend!

You dance with those
 Who are soiled with mud, O Friend!
 I have adorned myself with a string of pearls,
 You flee from me, O Friend!
 Says Bullah, "Pray, come home, my Beloved;
 It is time I had your vision, O Friend!"

Never again shall I boast of the beloved Ranjha,
 O friend!

WHITHER YOUR DESTINATION?

This *kafi* registers a protest against the excesses perpetrated by high government officials and other men of influence over common people. Bullah warns these tyrants that life is transient, and they should not strut with pride, treating people with callousness and disdain. The day they will be confronted by the courier of death is not distant. The eventuality of death cannot be avoided. At the end Bullah, in all humility, declares that he himself is the greatest sinner of all.

Apna das tikana; kidhron aya, kidhar jana?

Which is your abode? Whence did you come?
Whither are you going?

The high office of which you are prideful
will not go with you.

You perpetrate tyranny and oppress people;
You have taken to the profession of looting.
You can strut and swagger for a while;
In the end you shall have to depart.

You will take abode in the city of the silent,
Where the whole wide world retires.
He, the relentless one, carries boat-loads of men.
This boatman is known as the Angel of Death.
From amongst all of His countless creatures,
Bullah is the primal sinner of them all.

Which is your abode? Whence did you come?
Whither are you going?

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 6

WHO AM I?

This is one of the most famous of Bulleh Shah's *kafis*. In his quest for the nature of his self, it has a special place. Our philosophers and poets have often asked, "As a man, where have I come from, and where am I going?" But, it has rarely been asked, "Who is this 'I' who comes and goes?"

In answer to the question "Who am I?" Bullah says that he does not belong to any particular group or class. He is neither a pious worshipper and a believer, nor is he a member of the group of profligates. He is not committed to the Vedas nor to any other holy book. He is neither fully awake, nor fully asleep. He is neither affected by joy, nor by sorrow. He is neither among the wicked, nor among the virtuous. All these are contingent facts, dependent on something; but his essence is necessary, independent of everything.

He goes on to say that he is neither made of water nor of earth, neither of fire nor of air. He belongs neither to one country nor to another, neither to this religion nor to that. In fact, in regard to religion, he does not believe in its institutional and organized form. All the material elements of which man is made are perishable, but his essence is everlasting.

It is only in the last stanza that we get a clue as to what he really is, and from what source he comes. His reality is neither his body nor his mind, but his soul. The individual, shorn of all coverings, is left with only the soul as its essence. The soul is immortal, and is not subject to the laws of time and space. It is free from the constraints of birth and death, of growth and decay. It is a spark of the Absolute, and will ultimately merge back into Him. It is

in this sense that Bulleh Shah claims that he is the beginning as well as the end, and that he recognizes none except the One Lord.

Bullah kih janan main kaun?

O Bullah, what do I know who I am?

I am not among believers seen in mosques;
Nor am I versed in the traditions of unbelief.
I am not among the pious, nor among the sinful;
I am neither Moses, nor am I a Pharaoh.
O Bullah, what do I know who I am?

I am not in the Vedas, nor in the holy books;¹
I am not among hemp-eaters or wine-drinkers;
I am not among profligates, nor among libertines.
I am neither among the awake,
nor among the sleeping.

O Bullah, what do I know who I am?

I am impervious to joy as well as sorrow;
I am not among the virtuous, nor among the wicked;
I am neither of water, nor of earth;
I am neither of fire, nor of air.
O Bullah, what do I know who I am?

I am not from Arabia, nor from Lahore;
I am not from India, nor from Nagore.
I am not a Hindu, nor a Muslim from Peshawar.
Nor do I reside in the city of Nadaun.
O Bullah, what do I know who I am?

I have not solved the mystery of religion;
Nor am I a progeny of Adam and Eve;
Nor have I a specific name of my own;

1. By books he means the *Torah*, the *Talmud*, the *Bible* and the *Qura'n*.

I am neither among the settled,
nor among the roaming.
O Bullah, what do I know who I am?

I take myself to be the beginning and the end;
I do not recognize any one else.
There is no one who is wiser than I.
O Bullah, who is the Lord standing there?

O Bullāh, what do I know who I am?

Faqir, Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 44-45, poem 27

WHO CAN NOW RECOGNIZE ME?

The theme of this well-known poem is the radical transformation that love brings in a person. It is love for the Master that reveals to the disciple the glory and beauty of the Lord. Having realized Him within, He is now manifest everywhere—"The Lord is now seen within and without." And, the identity of the lover who experiences this state is completely lost in that of the Beloved—"No name or trace of me is left."

The last stanza says that the resplendent beauty of the Lord acts as a divine intoxicant on His lovers. Bullah too has come under the spell of that grace and beauty. His changed condition could now be compared to that of a swan transformed from that of a crow.

Hun mainun kaun pachhane?

Who can now recognize me?
Now I have become a different being.

My Guide taught me a lesson.
No stranger has admittance there.
He showed me the beauty of the Absolute Essence.
And His Unity raised an uproar!
Who can now recognize me?

Having kept himself transcendent at first,
The Lord is now seen within and without.
No name or trace of me is left.
All debate and dissent is over!
Who can now recognize me?

The Beloved himself displays His charm,
And makes the drinkers intoxicated!

Beholding the graceful pace of swans,¹
Bullah has forgotten the gait of crows.²

Who can now recognize me?
Now I have become a different being.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 334, poem 155

-
1. Saints, whose sustenance is divine nectar.
 2. Men of the world, who take pleasure in sense-gratification.

WHY THE VEIL?

There are many types of human beings in this world, but within them all is the same Lord. Superficially they are all different; in essence they are all the same. This awakening comes only after man has realized God within himself. After this inner realization, God is seen to pervade His entire creation.

In the fifth stanza Bullah once again brings out the mystic truth that to realize God one has to master the art of dying while living—"Whosoever goes in quest of You, he has to die before his death." The expression "dying before one's death" signifies the process of withdrawing the soul from within the body to the eye center where one can contact His light.

In the sixth stanza there is a mention of Krishna, Rama and the devout Muslim pilgrim to Mecca, through all of whom the Lord manifests himself.

In the last stanza, Bullah reiterates that he has learnt to recognize the Lord in all His various forms, and that he would make no more mistakes. He would never again be misled by superficial extraneous distinctions between man and man.

Hun kis thin ap chhupai da?

Now, from whom do You hide yourself?

Somewhere You come to be known a Mullah;

Somewhere You teach the moral code,

Somewhere You raise the cry of Rama.

Somewhere You apply the tilak¹ on Your forehead.

Now, from whom do You hide yourself?

1. The ceremonial mark the Hindus sport on their forehead.

Whether this "I" is mine or yours,
 In the end it is but a heap of ashes.
 From this heap it has now become white earth.
 And You make this heap dance to Your will.
 Now, from whom do You hide yourself?

Somewhere You put on round bangles,
 Somewhere You wear gorgeous apparel;
 Somewhere You come as Adam and Eve.
 Can I ever fail to recognize You?
 Now, from whom do You hide yourself?

You set Your camp in full view,
 You announced Your coming with the beat of drums.
 You made yourself manifest in the world.
 And then You rushed to the house of Abdulla.
 Now, from whom do You hide yourself?

Whosoever goes in quest of You,
 He has to die before his death.¹
 Even though dead, he fears You still,
 Lest You should kill the already killed.
 Now, from whom do You hide yourself?

In Bindra Ban You graze the cows.²
 In Sri Lanka You sound Your trumpet.³
 In Mecca You put on the garb of a pilgrim.⁴
 O, wonderful are the guises You wear!
 Now, from whom do You hide yourself?

Bullah has now rightly come to know You;
 In every form he finds You out.

-
1. To realize God within oneself, one has to withdraw the soul current to one's eye center. This process is akin to dying, and is called "dying while living" or "dying before one's death."
 2. Refers to Lord Krishna.
 3. Refers to Lord Rama.
 4. The reference may well be to prophet Mohammed.

Somewhere You come, somewhere You go.
He can never fail to recognize You.

Now, from whom do You hide yourself?

Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, pp. 310-311, poem 90

WITHOUT HABITATION

The Lord is said to be an entity beyond space and time. Bulleh Shah, in this *kafi*, says that He is present at all places. The essence of every living being and every object is the Lord. In fact, the whole creation came into existence by His command. And He put himself into His creation as its essence, in the form of love.

As in many other poems of Bullah, there is a pantheistic undercurrent running throughout the present one. He himself is the speaker and himself the listener—"You yourself hear and You make others listen." He is in the executed, the executioner and the spectator who watches—"You make Mansur ascend the gallows; and, then, stand aloof with unconcerned smile." He assumed the form of Yusuf and came in a dream to Zulaikha to rob her of her peace of mind—"You became Yusuf, and coming in a dream, You snatched away the heart of Zulaikha." He is in the pious as also in the profligate.

In the last stanza, Bullah in his usual style, pays tribute to his Master, Inayat Shah. He says he is not worthy of his name being associated with his Master's, who is like the philosopher's stone, when he himself is only base iron.

Kihnun lamakani dassade ho?

Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?

You abide in every form, in every color.

You yourself ordained, "Let there be."¹

Who other than You came into being?

You made everything emanate from love.

1. Refers to the time of Creation. *Qura'n* 2:117.

You abide in everyone as the lover.
Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?

Say, who brought Adam into this world?
Whence did he come, whither does he go?
Who can put any hindrance in Your way?
You yourself taste the grain and depart.
Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?

You yourself hear and You make others listen.
You yourself sing and You yourself play.
With Your own hand You play the melodies.
Somewhere You run away as an ignoramus.
Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?

Your oneness, You alone can understand.
You yourself move the string of: "I am the Truth."
You make Mansur ascend the gallows;
And, then, stand aloof with unconcerned smile.
Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?

Even as Alexander was drawn to Naushaban,¹
You became the apostle and brought the book.
You became Yusuf and coming in a dream,
You snatched away the heart of Zulaikha.
Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?

Somewhere You are in a Turk,
somewhere an Ethiopian;
Somewhere You are in a hat-wearing Englishman;
Somewhere You are in a drunkard in a tavern;
Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?

The Spouse of Bullah, Inayat, is all-knowing;
He is the captor of my heart, and the Master
of my soul.

1. Alexander went to bring Queen Naushaban. See *Sikandar Nama*.

I am iron, and he is the philosopher's stone;
You, O Lord, are ever in touch with him!

Whom do You tell that You are without habitation?
Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 194-196, poem 90

WOES OF SEPARATION

This poem is full of poignant longing of Bulleh Shah for his Master, Inayat Shah at the time of the invasion of Punjab by Bahadur Shah Durrani. In those times of destruction and chaos in Punjab, Bulleh Shah, who had been separated from his Master, pined for an early reunion with him. In the last stanza Bulleh Shah is quite hopeful that his Master would come and his pangs of separation would end.

Sanun a mil yar pyarya!

Come and meet me, my Love!

You have gone far away from me;

And, You have stayed on there forever.

What is my fault? Why have You forsaken me?

Come and meet me, my Love!

There is a peerless Beloved of mine;

It is with him that I am in love.

O you with a vast family,¹ know my state betimes.

Come and meet me, my Love!

When everyone is engulfed in selfishness,

The daughter comes to rob her own mother.

The twelfth² century has opened its mouth wide.

Come and meet me, my Love!

The gate to torment of doomsday is opened;

The region of Punjab is in a terrible mess;³

Fear of the agonies of hell has killed me!

Come and meet me, my Love!

1. Here 'vast family' is indicative of Inayat Shah's large following.

2. According to the Muslim Calendar.

3. Refers to the invasion of Bahadur Shah Durrani.

O Bullah, the Spouse will come to my home;
And quench the fire aflame in my heart!
I remember Inayat with every breath.
Come and meet me, my Love!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 141-142, poem 69

WOUNDS OF LOVE

This lyric depicts the suffering involved in separation from the Beloved. The lover is not only miserable in being away from his Beloved, but has also to bear the taunts and reproofs from people. In all probability, Bullah is referring to the time when he was away from his Master, Inayat Shah. Also, he was the target of people's ridicule, because Inayat Shah belonged to a low caste and practiced what was considered a mean profession of growing vegetables, whereas Bullah was a *Sayyid*, the caste to which the Prophet belonged.

In the third stanza Bullah gives a hint that he is still immature in love, as he cries and gives out his love for his Beloved. The wise lover would keep the treasure of love as a closely guarded secret. He would keep his lips sealed and would never complain.

In the last stanza, Bullah, as usual, ends with the prayer for the grace of his Beloved and union with him.

Ishq asan nal kehi kiti

What tricks has love played on me!
I am the target of people's taunts!

No one knows my heartache,
In this land of heartless strangers.
The one who relishes the Word,
He alone knows the Truth.
The climb to this peak of love is arduous,
He truly knows who ascends it.
What tricks has love played on me!

The fire of separation has in a moment consumed me.
I go crying in the world,
Because of this grievous burn of love.

He who suffers such affliction,
 He alone knows the pang of separation.
 What tricks has love played on me!

I am ignorant, what do I know of love?
 Only the wise know its secret.
 I am a sacrifice unto this Beloved,
 Who has no peer in the world.
 His form and beauty are unique,
 May he enjoy his fullsome prime!
 What tricks has love played on me!

Mad in Your separation,
 I am called the distracted one.
 I pass my time as deaf, dumb and blind.
 Cast on me Your merciful glance, O Master!
 Test not Your strength on me, O dear!
 What tricks has love played on me!

Your cheerful memory is calling me,
 I cling to it all the while.
 Pangs of separation torture me,
 With every passing moment.
 Day and night I weep, recalling
 The good old days which are no more.
 What tricks love has played on me!

Separation in love, like a butcher, has so struck me,
 That I have completely lost my senses.
 Love ignited my chest with a brand,
 And did not turn to have a peep.
 With numerous pretexts I weep on the sly,
 I keep my secret from my parents,
 Holding fast to it as my life.
 What tricks love has played on me!

In every way, in every manner,
 Your grace I seek at every moment.

O Bullah, if I were to meet my Beloved,
Grateful I would be a million times!

What tricks has love played on me!
I am the target of people's taunts!

Abdul Majid Bhatti, Kafian Bulleh Shah, pp. 158-161

YEARNING

This popular *kafi* of Bullah is replete with love and longing for his Master. He is eagerly expecting him to come, and he makes all entreaties to the Master not to make any further delay in coming.

Not being able to bear the separation of his Beloved any longer; he is in search of a suitable messenger to convey his miserable condition and to plead to him to come immediately.

People go to Mecca on pilgrimage, but Bullah professes that his Mecca or his pilgrimage is Inayat Shah, his Master. He laments at the cruelty of love, and for being forsaken by his Beloved. He then takes some solace in the realization that he is not the only one in trouble, because all his friends had also been the target of love—"Every head was enkindled with a blaze." With all their keen search for God, people leave this world without attaining union with Him—"all left, consumed in fire."

The rare few who do attain God-realization pass a happy life in this world too—"Those who are honored at the bridegroom's house are accepted in their parents' house too."

Main udikan kar rahi kadi a kar phera!

I am waiting for you, pray come some time!

I plead with you to send me a message.

Come, rest in my eyes and dwell in my heart!

Come with your dangling gait, my King Inayat!

I am waiting for you, pray come some time!

Who is such as can give you this message?
 What fault is there in me? I am your slave!
 Who is mine except you? Do not break my heart!
 I am waiting for you, pray come some time!

I have searched the whole city;
 whom should I send as my messenger?
 On riding in the palanquin of love
 my heart palpitates.
 Come, Inayat Qadiri, my heart yearns for you!
 I am waiting for you, pray come some time!

The first rung of love is like the *Sirat*¹ bridge.
 The Hajis go to Mecca for pilgrimage;
 but I seek to see your face.
 Come, Inayat Qadiri, come and hold my hand!
 I am waiting for you, pray come some time!

Consumed in your love I heave sighs,
 but you have a heart of stone.
 Casting your hook of love you pulled my heart.
 There is nothing that comes between you and me
 except your own veil.
 I am waiting for you, pray come some time!

Having adorned my arms with bracelets
 and my wrists with bangles,
 And round my neck a nine-colored cloak,²
 I have been tricked by Ranjha to be left forsaken.
 New sorrows have besieged me like a garland
 of thorns around my neck.
 I am waiting for you, pray come some time!

-
1. In Muslim tradition it refers to the bridge across the infernal fire, which is described as finer than a hair and sharper than a sword, and is beset on each side with hooked thorns. The righteous pass over it with the swiftness of lightning, but the wicked miss their footing and fall into the fire of hell.
 2. Esoterically, the human body with nine outlets.

I thought only I was in trouble,
 but my friends were also affected.
 Every head was enkindled with a blaze;
 all left, consumed in fire.
 Now that misfortunes have befallen me,
 my quarrels with others are over.
 I am waiting for you, pray come some time !

Those who are honored at the bridegroom's house
 are accepted in their parents' house too.
 The one to whom the bridegroom is inclined,
 sleeps blissfully in his bed.
 Empty is that courtyard, where the husband
 does not speak.¹
 I am waiting for you, pray come some time !

O Bullah, in the longing for my Beloved,
 fires blaze in my heart.
 Arduous is the path of love,
 my pain does not decrease.
 My heart is in throbs, my boat is in a storm !

I am waiting for you, pray come some time !
Anwar Ali Rohtaki, Qanun-i-Ishq, pp. 127-128, poem 16

1. Futile is that life in which God has not been realized.

YOU ALONE EXIST

That the lover and the beloved, the disciple and the Master are two bodies but one soul, is the subject of this highly effective *kafi*. The disciple has to reduce himself to zero, and completely merge his will in the will of his Master. In this poem the disciple says that his soul constantly revolves round his Master. His relationship with his Master is so intimate and deep that his waking, his sleeping, his speech and his silence have become common with those of his Master.

The expression, "shadow of a house in ruins" occurring in the poem, has been interpreted differently by different commentators. Some understand by it that wheel which revolves round the fulcrum of the Persian well. Some others are of the view that it refers to that house, whose roof has fallen and whose shadow revolves according to the movement of the Sun. Still others interpret it as a deserted house, which is haunted by a disembodied soul.

Tuhion hain main nahin, Sajna!

You alone exist, I do not, O Beloved!

You alone exist, I do not!

Like the shadow of a house in ruins,¹

I revolve in my own mind.

If I speak, You speak with me;

if I am silent, You are in my mind.

If I sleep, You sleep with me;

if I walk, You are along my path.

1. A house in ruins, of which only the walls stand ; the shadow of the Sun revolves only within the walls.

O Bullah, the Spouse has come to my house;
My life is a sacrifice unto Him.

You alone exist, I do not, O Beloved!
You alone exist, I do not!

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 25

Baran Maha

There has been a general practice among Indian poets in the past to compose poem-cycles on the twelve months, called *BARAN MAHA*. They described different moods of man in the background of nature. They have had the purpose to draw certain lessons—moral and spiritual—and convey them to their readers. In general, each month represents a human birth, which should not be wasted in idle pursuits, but should be utilized for the real purpose for which it has been given, viz., spiritual realization.

In this selection two months have been taken, the month of Spring and the month of Rain.

In the month of Spring nature is radiant in all its glory. It appears as a decorated bride, pleasing every mind. Girls are in a buoyant mood and they play Holi, the festival of color, to express their joy. And, yet in this cheerful atmosphere, the wife whose husband is away feels forlorn, and life is unbearable for her.

The last stanza brings out the invincibility of destiny, which cannot be changed by human endeavor. It ends with entreaties to the Lord for granting union with Him.

In the month of Rain there is an all-pervading atmosphere of mirth and joy. Here the poet sings of the delight of meeting his beloved Master, Inayat Shah. All his past suffering is over, and he is grateful to God for granting him the great boon of his Master.

THE SPRING SEASON

Phaggan phule khet jiun

In spring the fields bloom,
Even as women adorn themselves with ornaments.
Every branch is laden with blossoms;
Every bough is garlanded with flowers.

The girls are engaged in playing Holi,¹
While streams of tears flow from my eyes.
It is hard to pass the days of my life,
When the shafts of love pierce my heart.
And Holi is on.

Whatever was to happen from eternity,
None could erase the writing of His pen.
The slings and arrows of suffering
 have found their target in me.
O Bullah, convey this to the Beloved,
 in whose separation I shed copious tears.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 90

1. The Indian festival of colors.

THE RAINY SEASON

Savan sohe mainghala, ghatt sohe kartar

The rainy season is pleasing if there are clouds;
The heart is pleasing where resides the Lord.
“At every place abides Inayat,” calls the cuckoo.

The melodies of *Malhar*¹ give delight
throughout *Savan*.²

The sorrows which had afflicted me have vanished.
The boys are playing, the girls are singing,
And my mirthful Beloved has come to my house.
My hopes have been fulfilled.

God has made me realize my dreams.
My friends have come to felicitate me.
I have set my eyes on my Beloved;
Shah Inayat has dyed me.
My hopes have been fulfilled.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 91

-
1. Classical Raga connected with rainy season.
 2. The month of rainy season.

The Week

Some Indian poets have composed poem-cycles on seven days of the week, in the manner of poem-cycles on the twelve months of the year. They also depict different moods of the poet. In the present selection two days, Saturday and Thursday, have been chosen.

The mood pervading in the piece on Saturday is one of confusion. It is a blend of hope and despair. The lover gets news of the Beloved and goes in search of him. The search is extensive as well as intense. It is spread over hills, jungles and barren lands. It continues at midnight and at all odd hours of the day. The second stanza depicts the pain involved in the anxious expectation—“In my heart rankle rapiers of pain.”

The mood displayed in the piece on Thursday is quite the opposite. It is the mood of joy, as the Beloved has come in sight of the lover. The beloved Lord has assumed the form of man and come to this world—“Wearing our garb, the Beloved has come to the fair.” He has distributed the wine of love to His seekers and made them tipsy with the wine. In the rapture of union with Him, the poet forgets his very existence—“The goblet came into tipsy hands. I became oblivious of my very being.”

The last stanza is a denunciation of sorcery and spiritism¹—“Let not people cause me trouble; let priests

1. The opposite of spirituality.

be summoned to prescribe a charm; and spirits be called in the name of God, and bring Shah Madar to a state of frenzy.”

SATURDAY

Chhanichhar var utavale dekh sajjan di suh

On Saturday, getting the news of the Beloved;
I have become impatient.
I shall not come back home, happen what may.
O, what tangles you've created, Saturday?

I am distracted with the pain of separation.
I seek him in wastelands, wilderness and jungles,
I seek him at midnight and at odd hours.
O, I am engulfed by the pain of separation.

Every minute, every moment I wait for you.
While sleeping, I fight lions in nightmares.
I climb on to the roof and shriek and cry.
In my heart rankle rapiers of pain.
O my Love, I am ever yours!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat. p. 339

THURSDAY

Jumerat suhavani dukh dard na aha pap

Thursday is pleasing. No sign of pain or sin is there!
Wearing our garb¹ the Beloved has come to the fair.

And then came the good Thursday!
Vats of wine² fell to my lot.
The goblet came into tipsy hands.
I became oblivious of my very being.
O, I'm in ecstasy!

Let not people cause me trouble,
Let priests be summoned to prescribe a charm;
And spirits be called in the name of God;
And bring Shah Madar³ to a state of frenzy.
But I keep quiet.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 344

-
1. As a human being.
 2. This wine refers to the spiritual nectar within.
 3. The *pir* of *Madaria* fakirs, whose tomb is near Kanpur.

The Knots

There is a practice in our villages that for an important function, people put as many knots in a string as there are days left for the inauguration of that function. Then, every morning they untie a knot, and thereby find out how many days remain for the function to come. Obviously, when the last knot is unfastened, that is the day of the function.

Some Sufis observe a period of forty days for certain purposes. The number forty has come to acquire a special significance for them. Thus, in the beginning of the poem, a bride-to-be (signifying a disciple) counts forty days till the arrival of her bridegroom in the marriage party. These forty days she is to spend in her parents' house (in this world), making preparations (by meditation) for going to the house of her in-laws (the hereafter):

The poem continues thus: The girl, impatiently waiting for union with her Spouse, unfastens a knot every day and describes her mental condition of that day. At last the fortieth and the last knot is also untied, and her Beloved (her Master or God) along with the marriage party, arrives to take her. At the time of union the bride's self merges in that of her spouse—"She who is in love with the Spouse becomes the Spouse herself."

In the last verse the metaphors of the marriage party, etc., have been given up, and there is a direct mention of the relationship between God and man—"You become one with Him and stay not as His creature."

Kaho surti gall kaj di main gandhan kityan payan

Tell me, my wise friend, "How many knots shall I tie?
On the wedding day the procession would come,
so forty would do."

My father came and told me, "You will go to the
house of your in-laws.

Their ways and customs are different. You will not
come back again."

I untied the first knot and sat down, prating:
After all, I have to leave, I should get
my dresses dyed.

I looked towards the market and saw people
move away.

My purse was empty, they all began to flee from me.

Invoking the name of God I opened the forty knots.
The one who relinquishes her self
merges in the Spouse.

The marriage party pleases my mind,
He comes with dangling arms.

She who is in love with the Spouse
becomes the Spouse herself.

She leaves her sense and reason behind
to go away with the Spouse.

There is no thought in my mind now
except that of my Love.

Recite "We belong to God and to God we return,"¹
and behold:

That you become one with Him and remain not
Abdulla.²

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 92

1. An abbreviation of a saying from the *Qura'n*.

2. The full name of Bullah; here it signifies a creature of God.

Couplets and Excerpts

1. *Jaisi surat ain di, vaisi surat ghain*

As is the form of *ain*,¹ so is the form of *ghain*.¹

There is just the difference of a dot,

And the world with squinted eyes wanders in delusion.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 2

2. *Us ka mukh ik jot hai, ghunghat hai sansar*

His face is a light, the world is its veil.

He hath concealed himself in the veil,

Covering His face with its hem.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p.13 and 25

3. *Bhatth namazan, chikkar roze . . .*

Accursed be prayers, to hell with fasts,

And let profession of faith be damned.

Bullah! I have found the Lord within,

And the world wanders in delusion.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 20

4. *Chal Bullah! chal othe chaliye, jithe sare anneh*

O Bullah, let's go where only the blind live.

There no one would care for our caste;

There none would hold us in esteem.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 18

1. In Arabic script they are written as *ʿ* and *ġ*. Its import seems to be that the Lord and the *Murshid* are the same except for the human form. The Creator is reflected in His creation. The world in its ignorance considers the two quite apart.

5. *Itt kharke, dukkar vajje, tatta howe chullha*

Where the brick strikes, the tambourine sounds,
and the oven is hot,
Where fakirs come and eat, there Bullah is happy.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 27

6. *Bullah pi sharab te khah kabab*

Drink wine¹ and eat roasted meat,² O Bullah,
But make thine own bones as fuel for the fire.
Be a thief and break into the house of God,³
And rob thou that Robber of all robbers.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 41

7. *Makke gayan gall mukkadhi nahin*

By going to Mecca the mystery is not solved,
So long as the ego is not annihilated.
By going to Ganga⁴ the mystery is not solved.
Though you may take a hundred dips into it.
By going to Gaya the mystery is not solved,
Though you may offer many rice-cakes⁵ at funerals.
O Bullah, the mystery will be solved only
When the "I" is completely eliminated.

Qanun-i-Ishq, p. 272

8. *Bulleh nun lok mattin dende*

People advise Bullah, "Go and sit in the mosque."
He asks, "What happens by going to the mosque,
If the prayer does not come from the heart?"

1. The wine of love.

2. The meat of one's own ego.

3. This means, by meditation as directed by the Satguru, quietly, like a thief, enter into the house of God (within yourself) and take that treasure, which He has kept waiting for you.

4. The river Ganges.

5. A ball of rice is offered at funeral rites (*Shradhas*) to the deceased's relatives, according to Hindu customs.

What use are external washings of the person,
If the filth in the heart is not removed?"
Without meeting the perfect Master, O Bullah,
All your prayers and prostrations are futile.

Qanun-i-Ishq, p. 275

9. *Alif, andyan ton main sadakkare han*

I welcome those who come, I bless those who depart,
But not for a moment can I part from my Beloved,
with whom I am in strange sweet love.
My bones have gone stiff, my hands have drawn 'aunsian'¹
and I have scared the crows.²
O Bullah, I am mad in love with my Spouse.
Sleeping or awake I call for the Beloved.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 16

10. *Apne tan di khabar nahin, sajan di khabar liave kaun?*

I am not aware of my own person,
who will bring news of the Beloved?
I am neither of earth, nor of fire, nor water, nor air;
O Bullah, the Lord permeates every being,
as does salt in flour.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 7

11. *Dharmsal dharvai vasde thakar duare thug*

In shrines dwell robbers, in idol-houses thugs.
In mosques live vagabonds, the lovers remain aloof.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 44

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1. A kind of figure drawn on the ground in the form of the head of a rake, by which a superstitious ceremony is performed to prognosticate the visits of friends.
 2. A superstitious act aimed at bringing friends to one's house.

12. *Ashiq hoyon rabb da, hoi mulamat lakh*

You have become a lover of God,
and reaped a thousand reproaches.
They go on calling you an infidel,
you keep on saying, "Yes, I am."

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 54

13. *Gall samajh lai te raula kih*

Having understood, why raise all the storm?
What is in the names Allah, Ram and Rahim?

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 64

14. *Pa parhyan ton nassada han*

I run from the semi-literate; Oh, how I run from them!
O ye, my scholar brothers, the semi-literate
have befuddled me.
I run from them, Oh, how I run from them!

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 83

15. *Mullah te mashalchi donhan ikko chit*

The mullah and the torch-bearer
hail from the same stock;
They give light to others, and themselves
are in the dark.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 85

16. *Hor nein sab gallarian, Allah Allah di gall*

All else is mere chatter, talk only of God.
Some confusion comes from books, some from scholars.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 87

17. *Vare jayie onhan ton jehre maran gapp sharapp*

I am a sacrifice unto them who indulge in tall talk.
They return a cowrie if found, but clutch at a sack.

Nazir Ahmad, Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah, p. 87

18. *In ko mukh dikhlaye hai*

He shows His face to them, with whom He is in love.
Only by those is He found, who are His friends.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 365

19. *Munh dikhlave aur chhupe*

He shows His face and then hides it.
He plays hide and seek with the world.
He lives quite near and is not to be found.
Various are the guiles He plays!

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 365

20. *Bulleha vare jayie unhan ton jehre gallin*

O Bullah, I am a sacrifice unto them,
who charm me with mere talk.
They give a sewing needle in charity,
but an anvil they conceal.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 366

21. *Na khuda masite labhda na khuda vich kabe*

God is not found in mosques, nor in the *ka'ba*.
He is not in the *Qura'n*, nor found in prayers.

Faqir Mohd., kulliyat, p. 366

22. *Na khuda main tirath dithha ainve painde jhage*

I did not see God in pilgrim-places;
In vain did I ford long distances.

O Bullah, when the Master was found,
It was the end of all disputes.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 366

23. *Bulleha ghain gharurat sar tutt*

O Bullah, burn your ego to ashes,
And throw your pride in the well.
Forget your body and mind;
He will himself come to your house.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 367

24. *Bulleha hijrat vich Islam de*

O Bullah, I ever find special comfort in departure;
I daily die and I daily come to life;
I am daily in transit.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 367

25. *Bulleha ishq sajan de aye ke*

O Bullah, the love for the Beloved has made me a *doom*.¹
Our Lord is bountiful, but my service to Him is niggardly.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 367

26. *Bulleha painde pare prem ke kya painda avagaun*

O Bullah, I have taken to the path of love.
What is the cycle of birth and death before it!
If a blind man meets another sightless one,
Who will show the way?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 367

1. A caste of Muslim musicians and bards ; sometimes used in contempt for a miser.

27. *Bulleha man manjula munj da*

O Bullah, your mind is a bundle of *munj*;¹
 Sit in a corner and beat it to a pulp.
 This treasure is a gift from heaven;
 Seize it with all care and caution.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 367

28. *Bulleha cheri Musalman di Hindu ton qurban*

O Bullah, I am a slave of a Muslim,
 And I am a sacrifice unto Hindus.
 Be thou in amity with both.
 And leave the rest to the Lord.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 368

29. *Bulleha chal sunyar de*

O Bullah, let's go to the goldsmith,
 Who malleates lacs of ornaments.
 They have all different shapes,
 Though they are all made of one metal.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 368

30. *Bulleha achhe din to piche gaye*

O Bullah, the good days are left behind,
 When you had no love for God.
 What use is regretting now,
 When the sparrows have ruined the fields?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 368

1. The sheath of the seed of the plant 'sar', used for making ropes.

31. *Bulleha kanak kaudi kamini*

O Bullah, wheat,¹ wealth, and woman
are all sharp as swords.

You had come to meditate on Nam,
and on the way you were slain by them.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 369

32. *Arba' anasar mahal banayo*

You made a palace with the four elements,²
And then yourself entered to reside in it.

You yourself are the bride,
You yourself are the bridegroom,
And You yourself are the parents.
You yourself put yourself to death,
You yourself come back to life,
And You yourself begin to mourn.
O Bullah, whatever is His creation,
He is within it all, as its Mover.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 370

33. *Bulleha rang mahallin ja charhyon*

O Bullah, you have climbed on to the apartment
for festivities;

People are apprehensive about your welfare.

What we have earned from the world is a blackened face
and bruised feet.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 371

1. Signifies food.

2. The four elements are : earth, water, fire, and air.

34. *Bulleha je tun ghazi banana ein*

O Bullah, if you wish to be a conqueror,
 Arm yourself with a sword;
 First kill the egotist,¹ and then kill the infidel.²

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 371

35. *Kanak kaudi kamini tinon kaih talwar*

Wheat, wealth and woman—take them all as swords.
 The purpose for which you came to this world
 has all gone into oblivion.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 373

36. *Bulleha dharamsala vich nahin*

Bullah, He is not to be found in the temple,
 Where the faithful make offerings to idols;
 Nor is he found in the mosque,
 Where the devotees are pushed and the priest frowns.
 Those blest with wealth have placed mace-bearers
 at the gates of their mansions.
 O, catch hold of the door of the true Lord,
 from where suffering and anguish vanish.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 372

37. *Bulleha qazi razi rishvate*

O Bullah, the judge is happy with bribe,
 And the priest happy with death.
 The lover is happy with the Melody,
 Whose enjoyment never declines.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 372

1. Within yourself.

2. Mind, which teaches love of the world instead of love of the Lord.

38. *Bulleh Shah oh kaun hai*

O Bulleh Shah, who is He,
That Supreme Friend of yours?
He holds the *Qura'n* in His hand,
And dons the sacred thread round His neck.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 369

39. *Bulleha harmandir mein aye ke*

O Bullah, the Lord in His temple
Asked people to render their accounts.
He sent away from Him the pedant and the pedagogue,
And He beckoned the simpletons to sit by His side.

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 371

40. *Bulleha khah haram te parh shukrana*

Bullah, eat thou the forbidden fare,
Thank the Lord, and give up all repentance.
Leave thou the mosque and turn aside,
Your life will be released from torment.
Abide not by the word of love,¹
And save yourself from torture.
O Bullah, let's go to that place.
Where they do not stop from drinking.²

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, p. 371

1. Written in a sarcastic vein.

2. The wine of Unity.

Acrostic

—*A Selection*

THE FIRE OF LOVE

In this selection of the first six letters of Bulleh Shah's acrostic there is a continuous theme of love and the suffering it entails. And when this love turns towards God, the price it demands becomes manifold—"Whosoever has God as his Beloved, his face becomes pallid, his eyes shed tears of blood. He washes his life off his hands, who burns in the fire of longing." The second and the third stanzas continue in the same strain. In the fourth stanza he pleads with his Beloved to show mercy on him. In the fifth and sixth stanzas he gives reasons for his entreaties—"I have become estranged from the world. Since I fell in love, I have become a beggar... I make all endeavor to have a glimpse of Him, for my heart is pierced with the shaft of love."

Lagi re lagi haun bal jaun

O, I am being consumed in the fire of love!
Who can extinguish this fire from within me?

Whosoever has God as his Beloved,
His face becomes pallid, his eyes shed tears of blood.
He washes his life off his hands,
Who burns in the fire of longing.
O, I am being consumed in the fire of love!

I have become your firewood.
 Love has surged on me for a glimpse of You;
 My eyes shed tears without respite.
 How He sprinkles salt on my wounds !
 O, I am being consumed in the fire of love !

I have fallen in love with You;
 I have staked my life in the bargain.
 I suffer like a lamb in the hands of a butcher.
 O, I am being consumed in the fire of love !

Since I am steadfast in my love for You,
 To whom else should I cry for succor ?
 In the middle of the night I get up abruptly,
 I shriek and cry in the manner of the crane.
 O, I am being consumed in the fire of love !

I have become estranged from the world.
 Since I fell in love, I have become a beggar.
 With the mustard I have become an apothecary;¹
 And the world pesters me with its taunts.
 O, I am being consumed in the fire of love !

In perturbation there is no peace.
 I bewail and bemoan, within and without,
 I make all endeavor to have a glimpse of Him,
 For, my heart is pierced with the shaft of love.

O, I am being consumed in the fire of love !
 Who can extinguish this fire from within me ?

Faqir Mohd., Kulliyat, pp. 377-379, Acrostic.

1. Here the expression is rather obscure. May be the lover says that he sells the mustard of love but the world taunts him.

APPENDIX

LITERARY STYLE

Most of the compositions of Bulleh Shah are written in the form of *kafis*. It was the current form of poetry among Sufis in the times of Bulleh Shah. A *kafi* resembles a hymn written by a saint, usually in the spirit of devotion. In it the poet takes up a spiritual topic—often love and longing for the Master or the Lord—and deals with it in a simple, plain style. *Kafi* is generally written for being sung, mostly by *qawwals*¹. Some of the Sufis have composed their *kafis* for being sung in classical music, but the language used, as a rule, has been simple and is easily understood even by village folk.

Some of the *kafis* written by Sufis are interspersed with Arabic and Persian words, as also references from Islamic scriptures. However, simple language with a flavor of the local idiom dominates the linguistic form of the *kafis*.

Bulleh Shah has also composed the *Baran Maha* (The Twelve Months), the *Atthwara* (The Week), *Siharfi* (The Acrostic), *Gandhan* (The Knots) and *Dohre* (The Couplets). The *Baran Maha* is a poem-cycle on the twelve months. It draws images from the different seasons of the year and conveys moral and

1. Literally, a *qawwal* means one who speaks well or fluently. Here it stands for a kind of musician who sings, usually accompanied by an instrument. Generally, there is a group of *qawwals* with one of them as its leader.

spiritual lessons to the readers. In Bulleh Shah's *Baran Maha*, the dominant theme dealt in the background of the various months is one of love and longing. The three *Siharfis* of Bulleh Shah are replete with the pain of separation and the desire for union with the Beloved. In them also are disclosed some profound, spiritual secrets, in a simple though subtle language. In the *Atthwara*, too, in every day of the week, the poignant feeling of separation and yearning for the Beloved is conveyed in different shades of the main color. In the couplets, the poet dwells on some specific subject. Bulleh Shah's couplets are powerful and are marked with a boldness of expression rarely to be found elsewhere. They deal mostly with the futility of ritualism, and are often directed against mullahs, *qazis*, pundits and the so-called learned and the scholarly. In some of the couplets, hints of subtle spiritual truths are given in a simple but highly effective language.

Like other Sufi-saints of Punjab, Bulleh Shah has employed many symbols in his compositions from the everyday life of village folk. The most frequently used among them are: the spinning wheel, the cotton rolls, the ball of carded cotton, the spindle, the spinning party comprising girls or women, the quay, the boat-load, the well-rope, and the clay-pot. He has also called this world as the parents' home and the hereafter as the father-in-law's house. The relationship between the Lord and the soul has been described as one between man and woman, husband and wife, or bridegroom and bride. Often, borrowing from classical or folk love tales, he has called this relationship as one between Heer and Ranjha, Sassi and Punnun, Yusuf and Zulaikha, Laila and Majnun and the like. He has not only used the symbols of the nightingale, the rose-garden, the chief of

the Magis (*Pir-i-Mughan*), the wine-cellar, the wine, the cup and the goblet in the tradition of Persian mystics, but also those of Krishna, *Kahan* (an epithet of Krishna), cows, Vrindaban (the place to which Krishna belonged), the flute, Rama, Ravan (the ten-headed monster King of Ceylon), and Lanka. Likewise, to convey the meaning of *Kalma*, Bulleh Shah has used the words *Shabd*, *Nam*, *Anhad Shabd*, Flute of the *Anhad*, the Sound of *Anhad* and so on. For the Master, he has used the terms *Guru* and *Satguru* besides that of *Murshid*. He has called the human body "The Temple of God" (*Harmandir*) and "Abode of the Lord" (*Thakur-duara*). From this it is obvious that his objective was to make his message reach the people. Language and diction were only of secondary concern with him. He used a mixed diction only to be easily understood both by Hindus and Muslims.

The language used by Bulleh Shah in his compositions is generally Punjabi, but some of his *kafis* and couplets are written in a mixed language. In *Baran Maha* too, he has employed a mixed language of Punjabi and Hindvi. His whole attitude in regard to language was quite liberal. His main purpose was the correct interpretation of his ideas by the readers. Whichever language appeared to him to be more suited to convey his thoughts, he used it. Variation of language could also be attributed to the nature of the audience, which he addressed at different places. A mystic's message being cosmopolitan, he refuses to remain circumscribed within the bounds of a specific religion or a particular place.

Anwar Ali Rohtaki writes in his *Qanun-i-Ishq*, that it has become a general practice in Punjab and the surrounding areas to read and recite the poems of the

perfect man, Hazrat Bulleh Shah. Since they deal with the unity of God, and since their concern is with ultimate, spiritual Reality, and since they are filled with pearls and gems in simple, attractive language of Punjab, they have a powerful appeal for the true seekers of God. They produce such an overwhelming effect on these lovers, that a blazing fire of love is enkindled in their hearts. This fire, in fact, is the food which sustains true lovers.¹

He says elsewhere that in order to awaken people from their slumber of ignorance, Sufi-saints fill their compositions with secrets of Reality. Their writings strike blows on their hearts in such a way, that they become aware of their state of colossal ignorance.² Bulleh Shah's writings fall in the same category. They have the effect of lightning. On his listening to them, the listeners are shocked and stunned. This eventually leads them to a return to God.³

Bulleh Shah does not believe in saying something in round-about ways. He has no faith in saying it with tact or with diplomatic niceties. Whatever he has to convey, he conveys it by hitting the nail on the head. His poems are marked not only by plain speaking, but also by bluntness. This produces a poignancy of feeling together with a depth of insight, which puts all artifice to shame. Bulleh Shah's simplicity is natural and spontaneous. It is not the result of effort and practice. If it is rustic, it is also powerful.

One important feature of his composition is satire. Sometimes it is subtle like the prick of a pin, but sometimes its blow falls like a thunderbolt. Its target is

1. *Qanun-i-Ishq*, p.6.

2. *Qanun-i-Ishq*, pp. 63-64.

3. *Ibid.*

generally the mullah, the *qāzi* and the pundit. It is also directed against the so-called abstemious and the abstinent: Some examples from his writings are given below:

1. By this knowledge you are called "Good Sir"!
 You tuck up your trousers
 and trudge to the market.
 You accept a penny and apply the knife.¹
 You harbor much love for the class of butchers.
 Gather no more knowledge, O friend !
2. I am a sacrifice unto them
 who indulge in tall talk.
 A cownie found they return,
 but they clutch at a bag.
3. I am a sacrifice unto them
 who delude people with pretty talk.
 They give a needle in alms,
 but hide back an anvil.

In the writings of Bulleh Shah can be seen a frolicsome wantonness together with a subtlety of thought rarely to be found elsewhere. In his *kafi* "Now from whom do You hide yourself?" he says that the Lord himself puts on the garb of a cowherd of Bindra Ban (Lord Krishna), He as Lord Rama, then comes to sound the battle-cry in Ceylon, and then comes in the guise of a pilgrim (Prophet Mohammed) to Mecca.

In Bindra Ban You graze the cows !
 In Lanka You sound your trumpets of triumph !

1. Commit a murder.

In Mecca You put on the garb of a pilgrim !
O, how wonderfully You disguise yourself !

The tradition of going on a pilgrimage to Mecca was established after the departure of prophet Mohammed from this world, but Bulleh Shah has called the coming of the Lord in the garb of the prophet to Mecca as the coming of the pilgrim of Mecca. What a matchless way of description !

Continuing further, he teasingly says to the Lord: Happen what may, now I shall no longer remain away from You. I shall share Your secrets, and then I shall see how You can flee from me. One rarely comes across a lover of God, who does not only taunt and twit, but also throws challenges and ultimatums at the Lord :

Now I shall always live with You.
I shall no longer run away in despair.
I shall share Your secrets ;
Why do You flee from my embrace ?

Likewise, he calls his Master or the Lord, “beloved Thief in the cloak.” A thief is dangerous as such, but a thief hiding in the cloak or in the same house is even more dangerous. The Master or the Lord has been called “thief of the heart,” because He pulls the heart stealthily towards Him, and if an attempt is made to catch Him, He cannot be caught. The soul is like a fish caught in the net and the Master is the fisherman, who pulls the net without being seen :

O mystics, before whom shall I complain ?
In the fold of my cloak hides the beloved Thief.
Shah Inayat has spread the net.
And, on the sly, pulls it towards himself.

The way in which Bulleh Shah has taunted and reproached his Master and the Lord as his Beloved, it has come to make his poetry spontaneous and natural. His Beloved ceases to be a far-off entity like the pole star, and becomes one like a close relative or friend.

Bulleh Shah's poetry is marked by deep sincerity of feeling. It rises spontaneously from the depths of his heart, even as a fountain spouts from the depths of the earth. His poetry has a kind of abandon, which produces an intoxicating effect on the reader. It also inspires one to sing and dance. No wonder, it has always been a favorite choice for the group of singers, called *qawwals*.

NOTES

1. Abdullah Name of Prophet Mohammed's father.
2. Abel The second son of Adam, slain by his elder brother, Cain. Genesis 4:2
3. Abraham The first patriarch and progenitor of the Hebrew people; father of Isaac. Genesis 11:25
4. Adam The first man and progenitor of mankind. Genesis 2:7
5. Arain A caste among Muslims employed in gardening, especially vegetable gardening. Bulleh Shah's Master belonged to this caste.
6. Bayazid Bistami Born in Bistam in north-eastern Persia, and where he died in 877 A.D. His mausoleum stands there in honor of his memory. His grandfather was a Zoroastrian, but he himself was the founder of the ecstatic school of Sufism. He is famous for the boldness of his expression and of the mystic's complete absorption in God.
7. Bostan A famous Persian classic of Sheikh Sa'di.
8. Chenab A river in Pakistan, which Sohni used to cross every night to meet her lover, Mahinwal.
9. Chuchak Heer's father.
10. Croesus The famous miser who hoarded forty treasures.
11. Eve The first woman and wife of Adam. Genesis 3:20
12. Farhad The lover of Shirin, who was the wife of Khusraw Parvez, King of Persia. Farhad was promised Shirin as his reward, if he could cut through the rock and bring a stream on the other side of the valley. When Farhad was on the point of completing the project, Khusraw Parvez, fearing to lose his wife, sent the false message of her death to Farhad. On hearing this stunning news, he killed himself with the axe he was working with.
13. Gabriel An archangel who acts as one of the messengers of God in the Bible.

14. Ganga or Ganges The most sacred river of India.
15. Ghazi A Muslim warrior who has fought successfully against infidels.
16. Gopis The milk-maids, with whom Lord Krishna sported.
17. Gulistan A well-known Persian classic of Sheikh Sa'di.
18. Hanuman The monkey-god in *Ramayana*, known for his loyalty and devotion to Lord Rama.
19. Harnaksh A character from a tale in Indian mythology. Harnaksh, the father of the great devotee of God, Prahalad, had proclaimed himself as God in the manner of Nimrod and Pharaoh. He had obtained assurance from a holy man that he would neither die during day-time, nor at night, that he would neither die on earth nor in the sky, that he would neither die inside nor outside, and that he would neither die at the hands of man nor by beast. These assurances had convinced him that he was the Lord Almighty. He had, therefore, issued orders to all in his kingdom to worship him and not God. When his son Prahalad refused to comply with his orders, he was made to clasp a burning hot pillar. It is said that the pillar became cool with the touch of Prahalad, and this infuriated Harnaksh. In a fit of anger he hit the pillar with a mace, and a strange creature called Narsingh, came out of it. He had the head of a lion and the body of a man. He caught hold of Harnaksh, put him on his lap and sat down within a door. It was dusk time, when it was neither day nor night. Just before killing Harnaksh, Narsingh pointed out to him that he was being killed neither inside nor outside, neither on earth nor in the sky, neither during day nor during night and neither by a man nor by a beast.
20. Hasan One of the two grandsons of prophet Mohammed, who died because of thirst in the battle of Karbala.

21. Hazara or Takht Hazara The native place of Ranjha.
22. Heer The beloved of Ranjha in the folklore of Punjab. She was married against her will to Saida, whom she always avoided and was pining to meet Ranjha. Eventually she met Ranjha, who came in the guise of a Yogi.
23. Hussain One of the two grandsons of prophet Mohammed, who died because of thirst in the battle of Karbala.
24. Inayat Shah The Master of Bulleh Shah.
25. Ishmael Son of Abraham by Sarah's handmaid, Hagar. Genesis 16:1-16.
26. Jalali In the folklore of Punjab, Jalali was the beloved of Rodda, who had been asked by a savant to get the first lesson of love through love for a woman, before he could be fit to be a lover of God.
27. Job It is said that God gave a severe test to Job to judge the steadfastness of his love for Him. He was not only denuded of all his abundant riches but also deprived of his children, who were killed by the fall of his house. Notwithstanding all this, he continued to serve God in a spirit of devotion and thankfulness, even when he was struck with a foul disease. His body was filled with worms, which gave him such an offensive smell that none could bear to come near him. Satan appeared to his wife to restore everything to him, but Job firmly declined.
28. John the Baptist Son of Elizabeth and Zacharias, cousin of Jesus, whom he baptized; executed by Herod Antipas.
29. Jonah An Old Testament prophet who was thrown overboard during a storm at sea caused by his disobedience to God. He was swallowed by a great fish and disgorged unharmed three days later.

30. Kauravas The fighters who lost in the battle of Kurukshetra in the Indian epic of *Mahabharat*.
31. Kheras The tribe in which Heer, the beloved of Ranjha, was married against her wishes.
32. Khizr The prophet Khizr, who discovered and drank the water of life, whereby he became immortal. According to tradition, he acts as guide for those who have lost the way.
33. Kumbh
 Karan A character in the famous Indian epic, the *Ramayana*. He used to sleep for six months at a stretch.
34. Laila Laila was the beloved of Majnun, whose original name was Qais. Laila's father did not approve of their love, as he intended to marry his daughter to one far more rich and higher in social status.
35. Lanka Stands for Sri Lanka, previously known as Ceylon. In some of Bulleh Shah's *kafis* it symbolizes the human body.
36. Maha-
 bharat The famous Indian epic, in which the Pandavas with the support of Lord Krishna triumph over the mighty Kauravas.
37. Mahinwal In the folklore of Punjab, Mahinwal was the lover of Sohni. She was drowned in the river Chenab, while trying to cross it on an unbaked pitcher to meet her lover.
38. Majnun The lover of Laila. His original name was Qais. In his love for Laila he became mad and came to be known as Majnun, meaning "the mad one." Death at last put an end to his suffering, and his faithful mistress soon followed him.
39. Malki Heer's mother.
40. Mansur al-
 Hallaj The most controversial figure in the history of Islamic mysticism. He was born in the province of Fars, Iran in 858 A.D. He traveled widely to various countries including India, and eventually settled in Baghdad. His bold preaching of union with God and his assertion "I am the Truth," caused him to be condemned to death. He was cruelly executed on the 28th of March, 913 A.D.

41. Mirza In Punjabi folklore, Mirza was the lover of Sahiban. They eloped but Mirza was killed by the brothers of Sahiban.
42. Mount Sinai The mountain in the southern Sinai peninsula in Egypt. Moses wished to see God face to face. The Lord manifested His effulgence on Mount Sinai, and it turned into ash. Moses repented and became the first to believe. See Sura III. 142-145 of the *Qura'n*
43. Nimrod According to Muslims, he was the son of Canaan. He asserted himself against God, but was killed by a gnat. See *Qura'n* II: 260 and XXI: 68-69. According to Christians, he was a mighty hunter, and was Noah's great grandson. See Genesis 10:8-10
44. Noah The patriarch chosen by God to build the ark, in which he, his family and many animals were saved from the flood. Genesis 5: 9.
45. Paltu A revolutionary saint of Northern India, who lived in the 18th century. He raised his voice against the ritualistic practices of the day, and carried a tirade against orthodoxy. He propagated the *Nam Marg* (the path of the Word)
46. Pandavas The fighters who won in the battle of Kurukshetra in the Indian epic *Mahabharat*.
47. Pharaoh A tyrant king of ancient Egypt. Like Nimrod, Pharaoh also proclaimed himself as God.
48. Punnun In the folklore of Sind, Punnun was the lover of Sassi. Her kinsmen, not approving of their love removed him at night from her house by drugging him with liquor.
49. Qasur
 (Kasur) A city in the Punjab province of Pakistan, where Bulleh Shah had lived.
50. Rahab An Indian Muslim saint.
51. Rama The hero of the Indian epic *Ramayana*. He fought against the demon king Ravan of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) to retrieve his kidnapped wife, Sita.
52. Ramayana The famous Indian epic in which Lord Rama triumphs over the ten-headed monster king Ravan.

53. Ranjha In Punjabi folklore the lover of Heer known for his intense love for her. He assumed the guise of a Yogi to meet her, after she had been married to Saida against her will.
54. Ravan The villain of the epic *Ramayana*. He was the king of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), said to be a monster with ten heads. He kidnapped Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, who had to go to war against Ravan to retrieve her.
55. Rodda In the folklore of Punjab, Rodda who was a devout lover of God, was asked by a savant to get the first lesson of love through love for a woman. He then fell in love with a girl named Jalali. The relatives of Jalali strongly disapproving of this love, cut him into pieces.
56. Rumi The greatest mystic poet of Iran, born in the 13th century A. D. His *Masnavi*, in six volumes, has been translated in various languages of the world.
57. Jalal-ud-din Sahiban In Punjabi folklore the beloved of Mirza. They eloped, but the brothers of Sahiban who pursued them killed Mirza.
58. Sar Bachan The holy book written by Seth Shiv Dyal Singh of Agra, founder of the Radha Soami Faith.
59. Sarmad An Armenian saint who had settled in India. It is said that he used to go about naked in the streets of Delhi. He was put to death for his unorthodox ways by Shah Alamgir in 1661. His tomb is close to the Jama Masjid in Delhi.
60. Sassi In the folklore of Sind, Sassi was the beloved of Punnun. At night, the kinsmen of Sassi drugged Punnun with an intoxicating drink, and took him away. On waking, Sassi found him missing, and went in search of him in the desert of Sind, and not finding him, died in anguish of his separation.
61. Sayal The caste to which Heer's father belonged.
62. Shah Madar The *pir of Madaria* fakirs, whose tomb is near Kanpur (U.P.)
63. Shah Sharaf An Indian Muslim saint.

64. Shams-i-Tabriz A Saint from Tabriz in Persia. He was the Master of Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, the greatest mystic poet of Persia. Shams-i-Tabriz was flayed alive for proclaiming himself to be God (I am the Truth.)
65. Shia The principal minority sect of Islam, composed of the followers of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed, who regard the heirs of Ali as the legitimate successors to the Prophet and reject the other Caliphs and the Sunnite legal and political institutions.
66. Shirin The beloved of Farhad and the wife of Khusraw Parvez, a king of Persia. Farhad was promised Shirin as his reward, if he could cut through the rock and bring a stream on the other side of the valley, when the project was about to be completed, the king sent a false message of her death to Farhad. On hearing this, Farhad killed himself with the axe with which he was working.
67. Sohni In the folklore of Punjab, Sohni was the beloved of Mahinwal. She was drowned in river Chenab while crossing it on an unbaked pitcher that cracked. The turbulent waters of the river could not deter her from trying to cross it in order to meet her lover.
68. Solomon King of Israel in the tenth century B.C.; son of King David. Solomon is noted for his wealth and wisdom. Also, the reputed author of three books on the Bible.
69. Sunni The great branch of Islam following orthodox traditions and accepting the first four Caliphs as rightful successors of Mohammed.
70. Yazid The Caliph in Damascus, whose soldiers killed Hasan and his family.
71. Yusuf (Joseph) Yusuf was the son of Jacob, who lived in Palestine. Jacob had twelve sons, Yusuf being the Youngest but one. He was the favorite of his father. His other step-brothers felt jealous of him. They wanted to slay him but at the request of the eldest brother Reuben, they cast him into a pit. The

Midianite merchantmen lifted up Yusuf out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. They brought him into Egypt, where he was further sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Zulaikha, the wife of Potiphar, fell in love with him and wanted to tempt him, but he stood firm and was sent to prison on account of the false accusation brought against him by Zulaikha. Zulaikha earlier had a dream in which she had seen Yusuf as the paragon of beauty, and had fallen headlong in love with him. *See Jami: Yusuf and Zulaikha, Chapter 3, pp. 14-15, Octagon Press, London, 1980, translated by David Pendlebury.*

72. Zakarias The husband of Elizabeth and father of John the Baptist. Luke 1:5.
73. Zulaikha Wife of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. She fell in love with Yusuf, who was a slave in their house. She wanted to tempt Yusuf, but he stood firm. For some time he was sent to prison on account of the accusation brought against him by Zulaikha. Earlier, Zulaikha had a dream in which she had seen Yusuf as the paragon of beauty, and had fallen headlong in love with him. *See Jami: Yusuf and Zulaikha, Chapter 3, pp. 14-15. Octagon Press, London, 1980, translated by David Pendlebury.*

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Note— *F.M.*—stand for Faqir Mohammad, *Kulliyat-i-Bulleh Shah*.
N.A.—stand for Nazir Ahmed, *Kalam-i-Bulleh Shah*.
A.M.B.—stand for Abdul Majid Bhatti, *Kafian Bulleh Shah*.
A.A.R.—stand for Anwar Ali Rohtaki, *Qanun-i-Ishq*.

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When I grasped the hint of love,
I banished "mine" and "thine" from me.
I was cleansed within and without.
Now, wherever I look, the Beloved pervades.
Ever new, ever fresh, is the spring of love!

—p. 211

People advise Bullah, "Go and sit in the mosque."
He asks, "What happens by going to the mosque,
If the prayer does not come from the heart?
What use are external washings of the person,
If the filth in the heart is not removed?"
Without meeting the perfect Master, O Bullah,
All your prayers and prostrations are futile.

—p. 458

The mullah and the torch-bearer
Hail from the same stock;
They give light to others,
And themselves are in the dark.

—p. 460

Bulleh Shah